

Summer 8-11-2018

The Zombie Apocalypse Has Already Happened: Queering Subjectivity in Zombie Film

Jessica Dunn

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/etd>



Part of the [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), [Philosophy of Science Commons](#), and the [Theory and Philosophy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Dunn, J. (2018). The Zombie Apocalypse Has Already Happened: Queering Subjectivity in Zombie Film (Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/etd/1485>

This Immediate Access is brought to you for free and open access by Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Duquesne Scholarship Collection. For more information, please contact phillips@duq.edu.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED: QUEERING SUBJECTIVITY
IN ZOMBIE FILM

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Jessica Dunn, M.A.

August 2018

Copyright by
Jessica Dunn, M.A.

2018

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED: QUEERING SUBJECTIVITY
IN ZOMBIE FILM

By

Jessica Dunn, M.A.

Approved May 3, 2018

Suzanne Barnard, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Psychology
(Committee Chair)

Claire Colebrook, Ph.D.
Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of
English, Philosophy, and Women's,
Gender, and Sexuality Studies
Penn State University
(Committee Member)

Leswin Laubscher, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Psychology
Psychology Department Chair
(Committee Member)

Leswin Laubscher, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Psychology
Psychology Department Chair

James Swindal, Ph.D.
Dean, McAnulty College

ABSTRACT

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED: QUEERING SUBJECTIVITY IN ZOMBIE FILM

By

Jessica Dunn, M.A.

August 2018

Dissertation supervised by Suzanne Barnard, Ph.D.

This dissertation traces the encounter between psychology as a human science and the viral zombie film genre using the collaborative works of Deleuze and Guattari in conjunction with the queer anti-humanist theories of Colebrook and Halberstam. I interwove thematic (i.e. plot, dialogue, character development) and cinematographic (i.e. shot composition, editing, lighting, musical score) analyses of fourteen viral zombie films with theoretical arguments regarding the deterritorialization of the human subject and its relevance to psychology as a human science. The films were selected from the plethora of viral zombie films released after the turn of the 21st century. The selection was based on their relevance to three ‘themes’: queer deterritorialization, contagious becomings, and viral subjectivity, themes that emerged from my readings of Deleuze and Guattari, queer theory, and film theory. One of the central claims of this project is that the ‘problem’ that must be confronted by both psychology and the zombie film is the ‘problem’ of the human subject. In the broadest sense, the viral zombie film confronts the problem of ‘the human’ through radically disrupting the category of the human and other ancillary categories by which the human is propped up and codified. These films, instead, trace and take part in the emergence of what I call viral subjectivity. Thus, the encounter between viral zombie film and psychology as a human science offers a shift from normative theories and praxes grounded in the presumption of a stable, human subject toward ‘schizoanalysis’ as theorized by Deleuze and Guattari.

keywords: viral, zombie film, deterritorialization, subjectivity, psychology as a human science, queer theory, queer anti-humanism, schizoanalysis

*For my brother James, who taught me that the distinction between the living and the dead is not
as important as we are led to believe.*

Thanks to:

My stalwart love, Briana, who moved to Pittsburgh with me and is always on my side, even
when I am being the worst.

My most excellent friends Celeste & Jose and my brave sister Julia, who make everything suck
so much less.

My committee chair, Suzanne Barnard, Ph.D., who did not let me give up, even when it made
more work for her.

My committee members Claire Colebrook, Ph.D. and Leswin Laubscher, Ph.D., for all their
time, consideration and advice.

Special Thanks to:

Caffeine, cigarettes, alcohol and music, without which none of this would be possible or even
desirable.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	vii
Introduction: What is the human for?	1
Chapter 1: The queer thing about zombies	9
Chapter 2: Queer deterritorialization	29
Chapter 3: Contagious becoming	60
Chapter 4: Viral subjectivity	80
Conclusion: The zombie apocalypse has already happened	93
Works Cited	101

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: <i>Dawn of the Dead</i> (1978), Escalator Zombies	2
Fig 2: <i>Resident Evil</i> (2002), Unruly Zombies	3
Fig. 3: <i>Resident Evil</i> (2002), Eye	25
Fig. 4: <i>Resident Evil</i> (2002), Zombie Face	32
Fig. 5: <i>28 Days Later</i> (2003), Seeing Red	33
Fig. 6: <i>Otto; Or, Up with Dead People</i> (2008), “Flesh”	36
Fig. 7: <i>Resident Evil</i> (2002), Racoon City	41
Fig. 8: <i>28 Days Later</i> (2003), Deserted London	43
Fig. 9: <i>The Battery</i> (2012), The Refrain	50
Fig. 10: <i>The Battery</i> (2012), Dancing Ben	51
Fig. 11: <i>28 Days Later</i> (2003), The Family Tree	54
Fig. 12: <i>28 Weeks Later</i> (2007), Containment Failure	55
Fig. 13: <i>The Battery</i> (2012), Unraveling	58
Fig. 14: <i>The Battery</i> (2012), Ben and the Zombies	59
Fig. 15: <i>Cooties</i> (2014), Children at Play	63
Fig. 16: <i>Dawn of the Dead</i> (2004), Infected Child	65
Fig. 17: <i>Dawn of the Dead</i> (2004), I’ll Give You Something to Cry About	66
Fig 18: <i>Contracted</i> (2013), The Finger	68
Fig 19: <i>Contracted</i> (2013), Orchids	69
Fig. 20: <i>Contracted</i> (2013), Decaying	72
Fig. 21: <i>Contracted</i> (2013), Scream	73
Fig. 22: <i>Contracted</i> (2013), Birth of Maggots	75

Fig. 23: <i>Resident Evil: Extinction</i> (2007), Alice Clones	78
Fig. 24: <i>Resident Evil</i> (2002), Licker	84
Fig. 25: <i>Antisocial</i> (2013), Face Meld	90
Fig. 26: <i>Resident Evil: The Final Chapter</i> (2016), Movement	93

Introduction: What is the human for?

The 2002 release of the to-be-blockbuster, six-film franchise *Resident Evil* (Anderson) marked the viral zombie debut in popular film. In the film, a virus developed as a medical breakthrough cum bioweapon by a corporate entity called Umbrella Corporation was released on the staff of the laboratory where it was being developed. The facility's artificial intelligent security system (dubbed the 'Red Queen') explains to the viewers and protagonists of the film that the reanimated corpses that attacked them moments before were the result of "...an uncontrolled pattern of infection" by a virus that is "protean...changing from liquid to airborne to blood transmission depending on its environment" (Anderson, 2002). Though it may seem like a minor variation on an old theme, the popularity of this newest strain of zombie seems to indicate that the viral zombie has itself, gone viral. As many media scholars and general consumers have already concluded with delight or dismay, the ubiquity of this zombie virus in popular media indicates that 'The zombie apocalypse has already happened'¹. This mutation of the zombie trope from small cult phenomenon to pop culture staple (i.e. from 'isolated outbreak' to 'pandemic') could be dismissed as the progression of a fad reaching its mass production/consumption terminus. However, I will argue that the viral zombie and the films in which it subsists speak to the retrogression of the human subject and the emergence of what I will call 'viral subjectivity.'

In their 1972 collaborative work *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari claim: "The only modern myth is the myth of zombies---mortified schizos, good for work..." (p. 335). They were speaking about the zombie as it was imagined in the films up to that point. This pre-George Romero zombie was the result of an indigenous voodoo ritual (or,

¹ I saw this phrase in the reviews for a zombie film that was available for streaming on Amazon.com posted by an individual who identified as a 'hard-core' fan of the zombie genre, but who also seemed ambivalent about the, at the time, newer popularity of the zombie film genre.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

perhaps, more accurately, a western-European interpretation of such) in which an unwitting victim is turned into an obedient slave. For Deleuze and Guattari, this myth of the zombie represents capitalist conformity, a mortified existence defined by obedience to a rigid and oppressive regime. Deleuze and Guattari are not alone in making this equivalence. Fela Kuti's 1976 protest song *Zombie* equates the soldiers and civilian agents of a despotic Nigerian government with the walking dead, exclaiming "zombie only go when you tell him to go." Dolores O'Riordan (1994) in her song bearing the same title used the image of the zombie to describe what she believed to be the repetitive, reactionary, and thoughtless nature of the violence in Northern Ireland and the way in which those committing these violent acts were controlled by a fantasy of past glory. We can even see this mortified 'schizo' in Romero's first two zombie films, *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and what many consider its sequel, *Dawn of the Dead* (1978). In one of the most iconic zombie scenes in *Dawn of the Dead*, zombies can be



Figure 1: *Dawn of the Dead* (1978)

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

seen shambling around a mall pushing shopping carts, staring at colorful, moving window displays, and even riding the escalator, all with comical music playing in the background. In this image of the zombie (Fig. 1, above), we see mindless conformity writ large - a commodified subject shuffling through the motions that perpetually serve to reproduce the status quo. As we see in Fig. 2 below, the contemporary viral zombie is not nearly so well-behaved. Unlike the voodoo zombie, the viral zombie's ravenous appetite and penchant for destruction does not, in fact, make it a very useful or productive worker. This difference is repeated throughout the viral zombie film genre: when governments or corporations attempt to use the zombie virus as a weapon of mass destruction, or a process by which a tame and unquestioning workforce can be created, the viral zombie hordes inevitably turn on those that seek to control them.



Figure 2: Resident Evil (2002)

However, in these new films, the 'unruliness' of the viral zombie hordes is not limited to difficulties associated with biological containment. By their very nature, zombies have always managed to throw into disarray many categories that we generally take to be unequivocal. The

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

voodoo zombie challenges the position of the human soul and calls into question the necessity of volition for a living, human subject. However, the viral zombie unmoors any meaningful distinctions between broader classifications of *dead* or *alive*, *human* or *nonhuman*. Like the virus of which it is the symptom, it is unclear if the viral zombie constitutes a living or nonliving entity, hence Saunders' (2012) reference to the zombie virus and its host as "post-dead." It is more accurate, then, to think of the zombie (and the virus) as at once *both* living *and* nonliving. It eats, moves, and reproduces, yet lacks other tell-tale signs of life. Through this apparent contradiction, it deterritorializes the existing criteria for what constitutes life, and how life might be distinguished from death. The viral zombie also blurs the lines between what is human and nonhuman by calling into question the requirements for what constitutes humanness. Is it the so-called "higher consciousness" of the Aristotelian rational soul or, à la humanistic psychology and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*² (1982), a capacity for empathy and compassion? Is it a subjectivity fundamentally enabled and constrained by discursive practices, or merely a body whose genetic code is that of the primate species *homo sapiens*? And what of the 'genetic human' whose DNA has joined with that of the virus, as part of its process of proliferation? Perhaps we need to reframe these questions as different ways of articulating the same problem, the problem of 'the human.'

These questions not only concern philosophy and biopolitics discretely but is of immediate and central importance to practice and theory of psychology. When we address 'the human' in the field of psychology we generally presume that we are speaking of an entity with a definable identity, a set of experiences, and/or a continuity of perspective that finds its origin

² In this film, the gum-shoe protagonist is tasked with hunting down android 'replicants' which he is challenged to distinguish from true humans. However, by the end the audience is led to conclude that in their capacity to love the replicants have achieved humanness and may, in fact, be more human than the biological counterparts. We see a similar theme played out in a film *A.I.* (2001) written by Stanley Kubrick and produced by Steven Spielberg.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

within a stable structure that is the subject. This often-times assumed to be rational subject is conflated with the human or, at the very least, the telos of human development. However, the human science turn in the field of psychology is an attempt, among other things, to correct some of the more historically rigid theories of psychological phenomena that fail to account for what we would consider a more complete picture of human experience. Psychology as a 'human science' identifies and distinguishes itself by its attempt to understand the human as in process: processes of development, meaning-making, self-definition and often does so thoughtfully. However, what it often fails to problematize and call into question are the processes and specific forms of codification that produce 'the human' as a category. Due to this lack of critical reflexivity, psychology as a human science runs the risk of what Judith Butler would deem an insipid and romantic humanism that is encapsulated in catch-phrases like 'we are all part of the same race, the human race.' While the sentiment appears at first as well-meaning and ethical, it collapses difference under an ever-widening umbrella of the same (Eliot 2010).

Of course, this is not to say that the school of psychological thought that calls itself 'human science' is the only school that fails to critically interrogate this notion of the human. I would argue that every turn in psychology has been an expression of some dissatisfaction with the previous model or definition of humanness. The behavioral and cognitive turns in the field can be understood as a rejection of the human subject as divided and unaware of itself. The humanist movement, in turn, was a rejection of the human as a series of responses and impulses responding to its environment. However, it may be useful to frame these turns and this constant necessity to reinvent the human as an unconscious attempt to address the human as problematic. But these attempts inevitably fall at the last hurdle due to an inability to let go of 'the human' as a universal, trans-historical truth. Though some theorists, namely Lacan or, more specifically,

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

recent readings of Lacan, are more directly aware of the problem of ‘the human,’ there remains a hesitance to take that last, radical turn. And this is no less true of psychology as a human science than those other term it attempts to correct.

In his work *Ethics*, Spinoza (1677) critiqued the way in which he believed philosophy and religion anthropomorphized nonhuman forces of God and Nature. For Spinoza it was a logical error to attribute human values and intentions (such as a ‘punishing’ God or a ‘benevolent Mother’ Nature) to forces that have none, or at least none that operate as we are capable of imagining. In explicating this logical error, Spinoza also uncovers another error within the logical error: that the attributes we apply to the human are attributes applied after the fact. We decide which attributes are properly human and only ‘uncover’ those attributes when we make conclusions about humanness, like a child who hides an object only to be pleased and delighted when that object is discovered in the place where it was hidden. In a way then, it is possible to say that we not only anthropomorphize that which is, supposedly, nonhuman but that we anthropomorphize the human itself. This anthropomorphizing of the human fails to recognize what Deleuze (1988) tells us about our definitions of the human in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*: “You will define an animal, or a human being, not by its form, its organs and its functions, and not as a subject either; you will define it by the affects of which it is capable” (Deleuze 1988, p.124). Deleuze then adds a few paragraphs later, this corollary or, perhaps, caveat to Spinoza’s rule, “no one knows ahead of time the affects one is capable of...” (p. 125).

If we take ‘the human’ as a certainty, an absolute reflection of reality instead of a construct, then the human science disciplines that follow from this assumption restrict the direction and flow of thought and creativity. Moreover, the ideas and creations that follow from the assumption ‘the human’ are subordinate to it and thus serve to reinforce its central

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

importance. Psychology, generally defined, presumes to *know ahead of time the affects of which we are capable*, thus continually propping up predetermined notions of a human subject. Or, to say it another way, the most ubiquitous form of counter-transference experienced by theorists and practitioners of psychology is the placement of our patients' within the category of the human. Instead of expanding what is or can be considered human, collapsing every nonhuman (animals, plants, nature itself as one sometimes sees in ecopsychology) or what has been historically considered subhuman (women, people of color, homosexuals, trans-people, and the differently-abled), a truly radical psychology would decline to engage with a hierarchy of humanness, or what we think are human capacities and, ultimately, explode the category of the human, itself.

This is not to say that the project of psychology should be a post-human or trans-human project, these terms still find their center in the human. At best these movements would not idealize differently organized bodies as themselves transcendent or superior. We see this in what disabilities and/or 'crip' theorists refer to as the 'super-crip' phenomenon, wherein super-human and even mystic abilities are attributed to the differently-abled (MacCormack, 2009). The reversal is just as problematic, offensive and reductive as any other. As I stated in the introduction, a truly radical psychology would explode the category of the human. By exploding the 'human subject' and engaging with viral subjectivity we will no longer be required to understand differently organized bodies---non-white bodies, queer bodies, trans bodies, dying bodies, infected bodies, neuro-atypical bodies, paralyzed bodies, compulsive bodies, depressed bodies, bodies with dementia, bodies with schizophrenia, addicted bodies, bodies without four limbs and/or five sense, bodies with prosthetic limbs, bodies on the internet, bodies on the phone, bodies watching film...and, and, and---to be less than or more than human.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

For most of our patients, who are commonly understood and treated as ‘incomplete’ humans, a psychology bound by the human does not only fail to explore the affects of which they are capable, but actively denigrates or pathologizes them. Our notion of the human is a metric by which we judge the quality of their health, their functioning, their psyche and determine the course of treatment. How different would this course be if we did not presume to know what the patient’s capabilities could or should be in advance? How might we see the work of therapy differently if we set as our ‘goal,’ not a return to or development of known affects and capabilities that have been called human, but open to those that are still yet unknown? By addressing the disciplinary counter-transference we would no longer be confined to wondering if a patient is yet capable of all the affects we take to be the hallmark of the fully human. We are, instead, compelled to ask: what affects might they yet be capable of?

In *The Brain is the Screen* (1986) Deleuze remarks that, “The encounter between two disciplines does not begin when one begins to reflect the other, but when one discipline realizes that it has to resolve...a problem similar to one confronted by another” (p. 367). This is precisely the way in which we must understand the encounter between the contemporary zombie film genre and psychology as a human science. The viral zombie film confronts the problem of the human in the way it disrupts the category of humanness and other ancillary categories by which the human is propped up and codified. The encounter with the viral zombie through the medium of film can offer psychology as the human science a beyond to the human, albeit a horrifying one. And in this beyond, both patient and practitioner can find an infinite array of mutant possibilities, the creation of something new.

Chapter I. The Queer Thing About Zombies

“We are awakened with the axe
Night of the Living Dead, at last
They have begun to shake the dirt
Wiping their shoulders from the
earth.”

- Sufjan Stevens (2006)

As the dead “shake the dirt” throughout popular media culture, they disturb more than the idle gravestone on the big and little screens. They also disrupt the basic assumption that the human, in fact, exists even in places where one might be surprised to find the human as a centralizing notion. The extent of the consequences of ‘the human’ can be seen in contemporary anxieties, theoretical preoccupation with, and portrayals of our own extinction, the apocalyptic future of the human. In the first volume of her *Essays on Extinction* (2014), Colebrook notes that most of our representations of human extinction, and the supposedly post-apocalyptic world of their demise, reflect a certain “nostalgia” for the ‘properly’ human. She remarks that fictional portrayals of the (post)-apocalypse speak to the question of ‘what will become of us,’ without ever calling into question what ‘us’ refers to, and whether what it refers to should survive. These portrayals inevitably offer nothing more than a force-choice between the survival of what we take to be human--- and even what we take to be life--- or its demise. Colebrook imagines the post-human, post-apocalyptic monster that is the zombie somewhat like Deleuze and Guattari’s metaphor, an allegory of a monstrous other which further props up the “justifiably human” with an image of “humanity gone awry” (Colebrook, 2014, p. 84). But the viral-zombie-post-apocalypse in which we find ourselves does not require us to distinguish between extinction and proliferation, or to know if the spread of the zombie constitutes a mass extinction or human evolution. In a scene from *Dawn of the Dead* (Romero, 1978), a group of scientists, philosophers, sociologists and psychologists broadcast a debate as to whether the zombies are

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

cannibals, or if their consumption of human flesh constitutes predation of another species. The on-air debate is ultimately disrupted by a horde of zombies that breaks through the studio doors and begins to consume the members of the panel. The eruption of the zombie into the scene, while preventing the ‘humans’ from escaping the studio and their inevitable death and reanimation, allows for an escape from the human survival versus human extinction binary and perhaps even the human itself.

The disruption described above can be understood in terms of what Deleuze and Guattari (1980) refer to as deterritorialization. At times, they use deterritorialization to refer to a movement or escape from a set of relations that constitute a ‘territory’ whether geographical, social, political, philosophical, or psychological. The example above clearly exemplifies this usage. The zombies burst into the room, immediately destroying the set of pre-existing geographic relations in which panelist and ‘zombie’ were entrenched. We might compare this to the queer protesters who disrupted by their very presence, as well as their protests, the committee that had convened for the revision of the *Data and Statistical Manual of Mental Illness-II* (American Psychological Association, 1974). As in this historical example, the presence of the zombie disrupts the capacity for the panelists to speak only of the zombie in theory and forces them to also engage with it materially.

Deleuze and Guattari (1980) also use deterritorialization to describe a movement of change, mutation and creation from which emerges something entirely new. This movement of deterritorialization is not a movement that merely changes the intensity or degree of that which it escapes but is a mutation that marks a change in *kind*. And this shift in *kind* is what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as a ‘higher deterritorialization.’ Colebrook (2006) in her work *Deleuze: A Guide for the Perplexed* describes the conditions and consequences in this way: “We think and

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

live differently after a genuine concept is created, just as we see differently... after the event of a work of art” (p. 114). Deleuze and Guattari’s work, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972) despite its title, seems to indicate that, at the time of its creation the oedipal myth was one such concept, one that forever shifted the way in which we would experience ourselves and our unconscious. The problem, for them, arose when it was taken as a discovery, as if Freud had been on a psychic archeological dig rather than a production created through the process of Freud’s theorization and the praxis of psychoanalysis. The encounter between the zombie horde and the panelists is ultimately a movement of contagion that is a deterritorialization. The panelists who were comfortable enough in the certainty of their humanness to debate on the humanness of the zombie are seconds later no longer in any position or condition to weigh in on the subject. However, our encounter with the viral zombie through the medium of film, and the potential disruption and production of a new concept of or approach to psychology as a human science, would be a ‘higher deterritorialization.’ Adrian Parr (2010) takes up *both* usages of deterritorialization defining it as a movement of “freeing up of fixed relations that contain a body all while exposing it to new organizations” (p. 69).

Though it is easy to laugh at the pedantic panel in Romero’s *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), those of us who would identify ourselves as psychologists of the human science persuasion are often engaged in a similar exercise. When confronted with a new (or previously unstudied) political, social, or material realities or concepts we tend frame theoretical discussions and even clinical praxes in terms of how it helps or hinders human experience and humanness itself. Take, for example, the response of psychological thinkers and theorists to the introduction of new technologies. At worst, those within the discipline of psychology have lamented technologies as detracting from the human, alienating us from our so-called ‘real’ connections with others. At

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

best, our relation to techne is theorized as a supplement to the human, a prosthesis, an enhancement of what we take to already be human capabilities or functions. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), Freud takes up technologies and their development in relation to the necessity for civilization and the banding together that allows humans to stand against the ravages of nature. Technological advancement, in the context of human civilization, becomes an integral part of the possibility and necessity for sublimation of the sexual and aggressive instincts into the greater advances of love and work. In her discussion of a patient's relation to his Walkman, Kristeva (1983) acknowledges his use of the device as a prosthetic self, a way to organize himself in the world and to interface with it. However, she still frames his prosthetic use of technology as, at best, a stepping-stone toward engagement with the world without reliance on an intervening technology. What lies at the center of both perspectives is the human subject.

Whether intended or unintended, these perspectives have an inherently normalizing function. It forces the psychologist to determine if certain usages of technologies are problematic and pathological (i.e. internet addiction) or a healthy means to extend one's social and professional network. This question of whether the human is hindered or enhanced by a technology does not really advance or change our conceptualizations. It instead blocks the movement of deterritorialization that might disrupt our conceptualizations of psychological phenomena and yield any theory, praxis, or ethic that is truly new. It fails to recognize that our encounter with technology or any other object, term or phenomenon may constitute the emergence of something that is *neither* human *nor* nonhuman. In terms of new technologies, we often fail to acknowledge the way in which our subjectivity has always been both composed of and produced by technology of some kind, whether a rock or a rocket, a language or a computer

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

program. Or, in the words of Bjork (*Post*, 1995): “All the modern things have always existed.” If we accept this, then we must accept that subjectivity has never been human.

But, just as is the case with the panel in Romero’s film, while we continue to theorize the human, that which is outside of the human-nonhuman binary is always erupting into our midst, threatening to throw our comfortably crafted theories of the human subject into disarray. The viral zombie waits, is waiting, has waited just outside the confines of the boundaries that psychology as a human science has constructed for itself. The viral zombie, as discussed earlier, is already a crosser of borders and boundaries that constitute the human by distinguishing it from all that is not. It is, itself, an encounter between what we think of as the human and the viral and is neither living nor dead and yet paradoxically both living and dead. We see this paradox of neither and both living and/nor dead in the virus itself, which is a fragment of DNA, unable to reproduce itself with the use of host cells and, in some cases, RNA. The virus moves and multiplies and, yet, does not eat, excrete, or grow in itself, in any recognizable way. As such it is, the zombie and the virus that animates it is already a movement of deterritorialization, an escape from the human. Through our encounter with the viral zombie, the encounter that is at the radical point of departure for this project, we may be able to utilize the movement of deterritorialization that is the viral zombie. Rather than having to be satisfied with revisiting, redefining and ultimately reproducing the human, what we currently refer to as psychology as a human science can, through a ‘higher deterritorialization, join with and perhaps even facilitate what Rajchman (2000), in his work *The Deleuze Connections* referred to as a

passing from the ‘representational’ to the ‘experimental,’ freeing the ‘social imagination’ from the representation of anything given, prior, original. [And] thus...become part of the ‘fabulation of a people to come,’ which, no longer tied down to the ‘imagined

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

communities' of a time or place, would contrast with myths of a past or original people (p. 101).

For psychology as a human science, this shift would be a departure from a myth of originary humanness.

This movement of deterritorialization that is both a disruption of prior relations as well that we might think of as an escape or movement away from and a creative movement and/or mutation toward new organizations and relations is also related to the queerness of viral zombies. The queer thing about zombies is this movement of disruption and proliferation. The term queer, of course, is used in many ways both academic and vernacular. It can be used to refer to an identity that is, in part, centered around reclaiming the word queer from its derogatory usage, as an exclamation of pride and rebellion. In academic and scholarly circles, the notion of a queer identity associated with the goal of liberation continues to thrive though this understanding is contested more than its popular usage. But theorists like Claire Colebrook and Jack Halberstam, who would contest the association of queerness with a progress or utopian ideals, theorize the radical potentiality of the queer lies in its refusal to establish itself as an identity or telos. Thus, the queer does not adhere to that which is understood as 'given, prior or original,' but will take up completely unexpected and unprecedented configurations and relations including those of non-being.

In his hagiographic work *Saint Foucault* (1995), David M. Halperin critiques the term queer for what he calls its vacuousness. He does point to the radical potential of the queer, since the term does not refer to any positive identity or content, but rather a constantly shifting positionality that disrupts and dismantles heteronormative and phallocentric structure and assumptions. However, Halperin has significant reservations about queer theories that prescribe

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

or reinforce the creation of a center, albeit a movable center, from which one could “forge new and better ways of being queer” (p. 108). The viral zombie, certainly would not fit well into a notion of queerness focused on a progression toward a better and brighter future for the queer. In contrast, Lee Edelman embraces the notion of queerness and its lack of a positive referent, a point which was first introduced in Chapter 1. In his book, *No Future* (2004), Edelman states that the radical potential of the queer is encapsulated in its “negativity opposed to every form of social viability” (p. 9). Edelman (*No Future*, 2004), proposes that the radicality of queerness is the refusal to establish a positive identity. He argues that, at its most radical, queerness embraces its failure to take an affirmative stance for the continuation of life or the establishment of foundations for a practical future. This “queer negativity” positions queerness in opposition to a ‘positive’ task or investment in any future goal. Queerness, for Edelman is that which says ‘no’ to life and reproduction as a value or a goal. His proposed queer negativity completely undermines the very idea of an investment in some future or ideal state by refusing to establish a positive identity even in contrast to an already existing central human subject. This queer position “promises nothing” (Edelman, p. 11). This strain of queer theory might, initially, seem to bring us to the queerness of the zombie in relation to death and the clearing away of what we associate with a human subject. However, this theory lacks an account of the proliferative potential of the viral zombie and, likewise, the queer. What is at the core of this lack is lack itself or, rather, the early Lacanian conceptualization of Lack as the driving force of desire. In this psychoanalytic paradigm, a fundamental lack or gap is what gives rise to desire which is a perpetual and impossible pursuit of that which might fill in that gap or compensate for Lack (Fink, 1999). Edelman posits that the pursuit of social viability and futurity is a way in which, as individuals and in groups, attempts to fill this lack. As such, for him, the radical or queer move is

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

to reject the pursuit of that which might satisfy desire and to full, radically embrace rather than disavow the Lack at the very heart of subjectivity.

Deleuze and Guattari (1972), however, understand desire quite differently. Desire is not driven by nor does it ‘circle’ around Lack as Lacan theorizes in his early work. Nor is it a closed libidinal circuit with a fixed and predetermined amount of energy as proposed by Freud. Instead, for them, desire is any number of continuous flows that allows for the creation of relations, connections and, as we will explore in more detail later, assemblages. This conceptualization of desire is the basis for schizoanalysis, proposed by Guattari and Deleuze. In their joint work schizoanalysis is a theoretical movement with both ‘positive’ (proliferative) and ‘negative’ (destructive) tasks³. The ‘negative’ tasks are akin and operate through the destructive and disruptive aspects of the movement of deterritorialization. We can associate the ‘positive’ tasks with the proliferative, mutable aspects of deterritorialization and higher deterritorialization. These tasks involve the tracing of the flows of desire “independently of any interpretations” which would necessarily “introduce a term that would be like the phallus, structuring the whole...unifying and totalizing everything” (Deleuze & Guattari 1972, p. 322-323). This speaks to the ways in which psychoanalysis and psychology as a human science block the movement of deterritorialization through an adherence to the normative understanding of the human subject that we use to unify everything. It also, however, offers a cursory glimpse (which I will develop further toward the end of this project) of the ways in which a higher deterritorialization of the human subject might yield different psychological theories and praxes.

This conceptualization of desire and the mobilization of schizoanalysis offers a departure from the dichotomous strains of queer theory that, like the forced choice of human-survival

³ Here the notion of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ is not an ethical distinction related to ‘good’ or ‘bad’ as it is often used colloquially. Nor is it a binary of positive versus negative. Instead we can think of these tasks as working in tandem to affect change and the proliferation of viral subjectivity.

versus human-extinction, would require us decide between a comprehensible and productive future or abject emptiness. Instead by refusing to generate or affirm a structuring and totalizing term, Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge the non-being of queer subjectivity. However, by defining desire as continuous flows, they maintain the possibility of ‘positive’ proliferation. Colebrook, in *Sex After Life: Essays on Extinction* (2014) describes the queerness of Deleuze’s ontological position by noting that “Deleuze offers a quite different ontology and ethics of non-being. We are mistaken if we think of non-existence as the failure, deviation or difference from the present and actual. We need to think of non-being as positive, real and affirmative” (Colebrook 2014, p. 138). And so Deleuze, via Colebrook, informs us that non-being of queerness is not an ontological dead-end, but a potential to open us to the infinite becomings of which we are capable. Halberstam (2011) in his work *The Queer Art of Failure* follows a similar line to that of Colebrook in terms of both the destructive and proliferative potentiality of queerness. Though he uses the term ‘failure’ to describe the disruption that is part of the movement of deterritorialization he attempts (and for the most part succeeds) to shift away from the quotidian connotation of failure as a ‘dead end’ and reclaim failure as a ‘positive’ (in the schizoanalytic sense) phenomenon that makes room for something else⁴. For him the failure of established structures, organizations and relations is the proliferative and creative edge of queerness that sidesteps a naïve notion of the creation of, or progression toward, a queer utopia.

And so, we can understand Deleuze’s queer anti-humanism not so much a destruction of the human but the deterritorialization of the human subject that opens onto subjectivity of movement and of becoming. In his entry in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, Conley paraphrases Deleuze’s use of the dissolution of sugar in water: “When a teaspoon of sugar is dissolved in a

⁴ Halberstam purposefully resists the term ‘new’ which he associates with a masculinist and ultimately conservative thrust toward, and insistence upon, progress. However, the ‘something new’ referenced by Deleuze and Guattari does not necessarily have to refer to the progression toward some utopian ideal.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

glass of water, the ‘whole’ is not the container and its contents but the action of creation taking place in the ionization of the molecules of sugar, a sort of ‘pure ceaseless becoming which passes through states’” (2007, p. 178). And so, if there is a ‘whole,’ it is not related to *unity*, but is rather *the process by which different objects join to form relations*. In their process of constant movement, these couplings can form infinite arrangements of different objects or terms that join in relation. These arrangements, which Deleuze calls assemblages, can allow for the creation of new capabilities, affects or functions all of which can, themselves, give way to the formation of other assemblages. In the case of the viral zombie, the assemblage that is created by the ceaseless becoming between the virus and host can produce newly intensified senses of smell or hearing. The infected have new capabilities of movement that include decomposition and new forms of motility. One can also think of the formation of the horde as both a new assemblage and a new affect.

This queer subjectivity that opens onto becoming can be considered what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as haecceity, a “mode of individuation that is very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance” (1980, p. 261). Deleuze and Guattari draw on the Medieval usage of the term haecceity as proposed by Duns Scotus in the late 13th and early 14th century. In Duns Scotus’ theoretical framework haecceity refers to distinct particularity of an object, individual, or phenomenon (Cross, 2014). This particularity which distinguishes an object, individual or phenomenon from any other is irreducible and indivisible and is thus the very essence of individuation. In *A thousand plateaus* (1980), Deleuze and Guattari follow Scotus’ conceptualization of indivisibility to conclude that one cannot attempt to alter one aspect of a haecceity without creating something that is completely new, that is different in kind. This is true of encounters between distinct terms, objects or phenomena in which they are placed in

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

relation to one another will result in a radical change in kind as in a movement of ‘higher deterritorialization.’ This is a stark contrast to the kind of developmental individuation (or, perhaps, more appropriately stated individualization) proposed by psychology as a human science and psychoanalysis. Haecceity has nothing to do with subjects and everything to do with the relations between objects, whether molecules, animals, or affects. It consists of assemblages, and even inter-assemblages (couplings of assemblages).

In contrast, even psychology as a ‘human science’ tends to assume ‘developmental’ and often linear movement toward a specific and singular subject, in other words, to assume individualization instead of individuation. Deleuze and Guattari use the example of the psychoanalyst that assumes that the child’s question “How do *people* grow up?” is in fact the question “will I grow up to be like daddy?” Those who assume this view take a question of becoming-people and “collective assemblages,” (1980, p. 265) to be a question about development with the goal of ‘proper’ subject-hood. It is the only question that their epistemology, which has given them the hammer of the human subject, enables them to answer. The viral zombie is not so confined. The zombie couples with the horde and it is this relation between horde and zombie that constitutes a haecceity, a zombie-horde. Of course, the zombie itself is already a haecceity an assemblage of virus and human related through the movement of contagion. This relation through contagion, this assemblage of virus and homo sapiens that is the zombie is a becoming-virus, just as Deleuze and Guattari (1980) declare the werewolf a becoming-wolf that occurs in the assemblage of man, moon, and wolf. The viral zombie, in turn, comes into relation with homo sapiens through biting, forming another inter-assemblage, a becoming-zombie, becoming-horde. It is a subjectivity of relations, always in motion, encountering and joining with other objects or terms to produce “a line of becoming [that] has

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination...a line of becoming [that] has only a middle” (Deleuze & Guattari 1980, p. 293).

The viewer’s encounter with the viral zombie through the medium of film is yet another relation through contagion that allows for another becoming. Like the viral zombie, film is also a passing in-between of the human and the nonhuman, a becoming-techné which joins with the becoming-viral of the zombie that erupts into yet another becoming. Of course, due to its popularization through film, the zombie is represented across many different mediums: video-games, television shows, and even ‘zombie walks’ (in which participants dress up as zombies and shamble through city-centers). However, the structure of tele-visual, video gaming, and pop-cult zombie ‘performance’ are frequently only ways to engage viewer-consumers with the zombie in a manner that most often has effects of reproducing the status quo. This is most obviously true with the so-called zombie-walks, in which the horrifying becomes comical and the grotesque, trendy. By inserting the zombie into the old formula that has generated income and entertained audiences for decades, business moguls and everyday consumers alike attempt to constrain, and thus mitigate, the more radical implications of the viral zombie. Thus, fans can have arguments such as whether the fast-paced zombie of *Resident Evil* (2002) or the rage-zombie of *28 Days Later* (2003) are ‘true to zombie canon,’ and whether a person can survive the zombie apocalypse by simply following the guidelines set out in *The Zombie Survival Guide* (Brooks, 2003). Similarly, television series rely on storytelling that creates characters and events novel enough to draw audiences, but structured enough to allow for redundancy: the next season, the newest spin off, circling around until all possible branches have been exploited. Even video games in which players might fight zombies and/or fight humans as zombies, rely on highly simplistic scripts that draw primarily from hegemonic representations of the ‘sanitized’ zombie.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

In this medium, zombies act as a foil for the protagonist, primarily reinforcing the players sense of the value and power of normative identities. These domesticated zombies are closer to the voodoo zombie referenced in the introduction than to the viral zombie portrayed in contemporary film, and thus fail to take us beyond merely ‘playing dead’ to a becoming-viral or even, becoming-techne.

The predominant focus on film was not the only exclusion criteria employed to determine the scope of this project. Films were curated by date of release and primary language spoken in the film. Since the viral zombie did not officially emerge in the context of popular media and film before the turn of the 21st century, the films analyzed were limited to those released after 2000. English is the primary language spoken in all the films featured in this dissertation to avoid any issues with linguistic and cultural interpretation. Films that did not portray a viral or undefined epidemiology of zombiism were also excluded. Any films that were inaccessible via DVD or online streaming were removed from the list. These parameters yielded thirty-two potential viral zombie films for analysis. Then, based on close readings of texts across queer theory, film studies and film theory, and the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, an outline of three ‘themes’ emerged. These themes--- Queer Deterritorialization, Contagious Becoming, and Viral Subjectivity--- ultimately became the titles of Chapters 2, 3, and 4 in the dissertation.

With these broad ‘themes’ in mind, I watched each film twice. In the first viewing, I familiarized myself with the plot and cinematic style of the films while making ‘mental notes’ of relevant themes. In the second viewing, I took contemporaneous typed notes on each film as I watched it, pausing frequently to make certain I did not miss important visual details or misquote. I also viewed each film for the second time using closed captions to ensure the

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

accuracy of film quotes. I also took down the timestamps of potentially useful screenshots. Once I had compiled all the contemporaneous notes, I chose films that, based on a review of the notes seemed to yield the most useful thematic and cinematographic content for analysis. This ultimately yielded fourteen films for analysis. This number does not include film sequels, the content of which I used in limited ways if it was relevant to my analysis of the first film. The *Resident Evil* (Anderson, 2002-2016) film franchise which I used in its entirety was an exception to the exclusion of sequels. I made this decision because the franchise not only spanned the contemporary viral zombie film movement, but also spanned all the ‘themes’ that I had identified. For the most part, this method of including and excluding certain films was successful. In some cases, a film was excluded at the notation review phase that, in retrospect, might have opened onto new and interesting vectors for contagion and analysis that would have added significantly to the conclusions of this project. One such film, *Re-Kill* (Milev & Hurst, 2015), was filmed from the perspective of a child watching what appears to be a parody of a cable news network. The content of the news network shifts between dystopian commercial content, ‘breaking’ news coverage, and a reality television show that follows a squadron of soldiers on the front lines of the zombie outbreak known as the ‘Re-kill Squad.’ An analysis of this film would have likely pushed the final theme of ‘viral subjectivity’ even further, particularly in terms of a movement toward the non- or post-organic. Ultimately, all the films chosen for analysis were chosen for their deterritorializing, contagious, and viral potentials and their capacity to engage the viewer in unexpected ways.

All cinema engages with the brain in a manner akin to the zombie virus which, according to the Red Queen security program in *Resident Evil*, “provides a massive jolt to those trace electrical impulses” (Anderson, 2002) that occur in even the ‘dead’ brain. According to Deleuze,

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

cinema, also provides a ‘jolt’ or shock to the brain that unsettles the predetermined and familiar neural pathways, patterns of thought, and expectations. This capacity of cinema to ‘shock’ us out of the familiar and automatic could only occur with a phenomenon that at first appears to be a kind of ‘giving over’ of control and self-determination. This engagement transforms us into a viewing subjectivity through what film theorists refer to as ‘suture,’ wherein the viewer’s own perspective and subjectivity is decentralized and the gaze of the camera becomes our primary mode of sensory-perception. Suture is achieved through various film techniques including the framing, cutting and piecing together of different shots. Most commonly we think of the shot and reverse-shot structure, which is when we are shown a scene or image immediately followed by a close-up shot of a character indicating to the viewer that what they have previously seen was seen through the gaze of that character⁵ (Silverman, 1983). Thus, the elision of the camera’s inhuman gaze through its linkage to the gaze of character also frames the subjectivity of the viewer. Consequently, the viewer becomes host to the cinematographic subjectivity of the film.

Suture initially gives the viewer the sensation of a smooth, continuous experience of the ‘world’ of the film, whether through the omniscience of the third-person, panoramic shots or the shot-reverse shot relation that offers the gaze of the character as the viewer’s own. However, it is this very illusion that creates film’s radical potential to disrupt thought and sensation. By allowing us to experience ourselves as whole, even if only temporarily, film offers the viewer a pleasurable sense of mastery, a privileged position if you will. But once the viewer has been made comfortable, has accepted the gaze of the camera as their own, the moments of deviation, of uncertainty and disorientation in the narrative function of the film are inescapable. The viewing subjectivity is thrown back on itself, aware now that it is not a unified and continuous

⁵ For a detailed example of the shot/reverse shot, see the description and analysis of one of the scenes from *Resident Evil* which appears at the beginning of the following chapter.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

whole, but rather a series of gaps and irrational cuts that produce subjectivity and even the brain itself. Likewise, the zombie virus, or any virus for that matter, is a parasite to our own systems of cellular reproduction to propagate and spread through the host. Its coupling with these cells it disintegrates and deterritorializing the human genetic code. Perhaps film and the viral zombie is working together in synergistic fashion to disrupt the notion of the human that allows for a proliferative nonhuman subjectivity.

Film is, of course, already an assemblage of camera(s), actors, and editing processes. And when this assemblage of apparatuses is joined by the assemblage that is already the viewer, it forms yet another assemblage that is the viewing subjectivity. The suture forms an assemblage, a becoming-viewer, when the viewer adopts the gaze of the camera. But the technology of film has changed significantly, which, in turn, changes the viewer-film assemblage. In his book, *The Virtual Life of Film* (2007), Rodowick talks about the emergence of digital technologies and computer-generated images (CGI). He articulates the anxieties that have arisen in the discipline of film theory and cinema studies since the emergence and popularization of the digital, the so called ‘death of film.’ However, he argues that this forced dichotomy between analog and the digital is a fallacy, and just as there is not a ‘pure’ human subject, there can be no ‘pure’ cinema. In his defense of the continuation (the ‘life’ if you will) of cinema, even with the inclusion of computer generated images that have no concrete origin, one can see the potential for further deterritorialization of the human subject and the generation of assemblages comprised of film to be and viewer-subjectivity to be. And so, as this fundamentally changes the assemblage, perhaps this “death” makes room for the viral zombie in a way that prior cinematic-assemblages could not. The digitally enhanced, or even the completely digitally generated zombie, can be shown in the process of becoming as it shifts and changes in a way that was not possible when special

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

effects make-up was the primary *modus operandi*. It also allows for the zombie to mutate in ways that may almost completely obliterate the physical forms we associate with humanness. But even more than that, the digital viral zombie has the capacity to push the viral zombie far beyond the limitations of biological transmission, allowing for a line of becoming that may yet pass between the organic and inorganic⁶.

The coupling of the viral zombie (which is itself a becoming-virus assemblage) with the becoming assemblage of film opens a relation between the zombie and the viewing subjectivity. As previously mentioned, while the viewer at first finds this to be a pleasurable experience, the gaze continuous and whole, it is a vector for technological contagion. As an example, we can identify this contagion in some of the earliest scenes of the first *Resident Evil* (Anderson 2002) film. Following the opening scenes of the film in which the T-virus is released into the Hive and



Figure 3: *Resident Evil* (2002)

⁶ The digital assemblage and the becomings that this opens onto will be explored and explicated further in Chapter 4: Viral Subjectivity. There I will discuss the movement of the viral zombie away from the ‘biological’ and toward the digital in films such as *Pontypool*, *Antisocial*, and in *Resident Evil: The Final Chapters*.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

the Red Queen ‘takes steps’ to attempt to contain the chain of infection, we encounter an enigmatic image (Fig. 3, above) which we will only later assume to be associated with the film’s protagonist, Alice. This image is an extreme close-up of an eye opening. This shot, lasts a few seconds then cuts to a down-shot of an apparently female body lying on the floor of a shower. This initial shot of an eye, without a body or even a face, allows for a gaze to exist without a clear, pre-established subject by dissociating it from an embodied whole. The viewer, who we accept as now being coupled to this assemblage becoming, shares in this disembodied gaze, unsure if what the previous scenes they have just witnessed were revealed through the omniscient ‘eye’ of the camera, or the ‘unidentified’ eye into which that we are now looking. The viewer may wonder if they have just witnessed a dream, or premonition, or something that the eye has just watched on another screen. And this uncertainty of view is further compounded by uncertainty in the subject. This scene is an extended shot-reverse shot structure which places the viewer in relation to the ‘character’ that is Alice.

Even as the eye is ‘re-joined’ with a body that we will come to associate with ‘Alice,’ Alice still fails to exhibit an a priori sense of self or identity that we often associate with a human subject. As she wanders around her surroundings, moving from a bathroom to what appears to be a bedroom, she looks upon everything as if seeing it for the first time. When she comes across a note, she picks up a pen and begins to copy it, obviously attempting to determine if she had written it. Alice also exhibits a deterritorialized subjectivity that goes beyond the contents of her memory or lack thereof. In these initial scenes, there is a blankness to her face and the monotony of her voice that does not offer us an experience of an identity that is Alice or we-as-Alice. As the film series progresses we-as-Alice never discover or experience any original identity or subject that pre-exists the events of the film. And yet, despite this ‘lack,’ Alice continues to

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

move through and is moved through the events of the film. She survives in ways that are mysterious and impossible, continually mutating with each nonhuman coupling. The T-virus is in continual mutation, beyond any control or imagining of its creators, becoming something new with each new infection, in each new host, a continuous and chaotic becoming that queers any of our attempts to contain or even understand it. Even Alice herself is a continuous viral becoming, an interaction in which she is always changing and mutating, neither human nor zombie. It is unclear to Alice, the characters she encounters and the viewer whether she is 'positive' evolution or 'regressive' monstrosity. Alice/Virus/Becoming is cloned so many times that it is no longer clear if she is even 'the original' Alice, queering what might be considered a stable, centralized subject. And so, we-as-Alice, are becoming too. We join in the assemblage, we-as-Alice become infected with this subjectivity and carry this infection from the film, into other assemblages, an ouroboros of contagion.

Let us suppose that Alice is our patient. What do we make of her, as theorists and/or practitioners of psychology as a human science? We might be tempted to diagnose her as schizoid, limited in or even incapable of certain social and affective responses and experiences. Perhaps we would understand her as traumatized or dissociative, unable to fully account for and integrate her current 'self' with that which she has, is and will experience. Again, any of these conclusions rely on the presumption that we are human and, thus, exist on a spectrum of more or less fully human though we may soften this normative blow with terms like health and pathology. Movements within and outside of the field of psychology have attempted less brutally dichotomous distinctions than 'normal' versus 'pathological.' The Anti-psychiatry movement, the adjacent Mad Pride movement, and even the human science approach to psychology engage in the rhetoric of liberation and the establishment of rights and privileges that should be afforded

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

to those who have been considered mad or mentally ill. There is, of course nothing inherently wrong with the pursuit of right and protections for individuals who might otherwise find themselves at the mercy of systems and epistemologies that do not serve their particular interests. We can think of these movements as 'harm reduction' measures for the field of psychology and those captured within it. But this harm reduction is hardly the radical turn from the normative project of psychology. As such, these movements are vulnerable to reabsorption into and commodification by the field of psychology as a whole and the dominant, reactionary forces that constitute it. However, if we release ourselves from the confines of the human subject as a basis of subjectivity, we may be able to instead understand Alice in terms of the mutant flows of desire in which she moves. We can see her not as a broken or botched human and explore and trace the assemblages which she enters and creates. And, in so doing, open ourselves to our own subjectivity beyond the human subject.

In fact, it is clear to many theorists from myriad different disciplines that the notion of a human subject seems to no longer provide a satisfactory explanation for contemporary subjectivity. Our constant engagement with the nonhuman, the inorganic, the digital and the viral inevitably disrupts the illusion of a properly human subject. The viral zombie-film, perhaps, offers us a more apt model for subjectivity that mutates to include non-human capacities, affects, and connections that were impossible in previous arrangements. This is not, of course, to say that we are entirely at ease with these mutant possibilities. Thus, the zombie film remains nestled comfortably within the horror genre and subgenre hybrids (comedy-horror, action-horror). It speaks to the anxiety and dread with which we approach the possibility of abandoning the human and of what terrible and mutant becomings the future might bring. The zombie ultimately disrupts any attempt to distinguish between extinction and proliferation. This dissolution of

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

boundaries, this explosion of identities and concepts thought fixed and mutually exclusive can be understood as a ‘queerness of becoming’ which, as theorized by Colebrook (2014) in her essay *Queer Aesthetics*, is contrasted with any movement toward the normative as

becoming [that] does not realize and actualize itself, does not flourish into presence, but bears the capacity to annihilate itself, to refuse its ownness in order to attach, transductively, to becomings that are external and unmasterable (p. 83)

Thus, the zombie, both in its violations of the boundaries between life and death, human and nonhuman, extinction and proliferation, and in its protean mutations, by its very nature cannot afford us a vision of the future, of what we are becoming (extinct, advanced, alive, dead, human, or virus). Thus, the viral zombie film through the assemblage of heterogeneous bodies annihilates the human subject offering a subjectivity without origin or end, a queer and continual becoming that is viral subjectivity.

Chapter II. Queer Deterritorialization

“I know, I know the nation’s past
I know, I know they rust, at last
They tremble with the nervous
thought
Of having been, at last, forgot.”
-Sufjan Stevens (2006)

When I first began to express my intention to write about zombies to academic colleagues, I got a variety of reactions, ranging from incredulous, to bemused, to interested. One response has stayed with me, perhaps offering its own form of contagion that has ultimately changed the focus of this project. One skeptical colleague said: “I get vampires. That makes sense to me. But zombies? Zombies aren’t sexy.” This was a serious question, and I took it seriously, because it raised questions about my own experience of the popular culture zombie phenomenon and my intense enjoyment of zombies and zombie films. I had no answer for her

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

then; no way of explaining my own, much less anyone else's, investment in the zombie. Because she is, if you will excuse the pun, dead on. The vampire, as it is envisioned in many popular films and television, from films like *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (Coppola, 1992) possesses a hypnotic charisma that can hold its prey in thrall, as well as a preternatural beauty and grace that thus embodies the most intense kind of seductive power. Though not all vampires are physically beautiful, there is still often an erotic draw to their power, as with Dracula in his aged form, before he transforms into his youthful appearance. Their bite, a violent taking of blood, will and life, is orgasmic, a press of mouth and teeth into the erogenous zones of neck, wrist or thigh. Thus, it can be hypothesized that the sexiness of the vampire is the appeal of mastery. The vampire is mastery, over physical being and inhibition, the laws of nature and ultimately, over death itself.

In contrast, the zombie masters nothing, not even its own body which is often clumsy, deformed, and/or decomposing. Even the newer, 'fast-moving' zombies could not be characterized as graceful. Unlike their fanged counterparts, the zombie does not choose when and where it bites and to what effect. It does not seduce its prey, but chases it down and rips flesh from whatever area of the victim's body it can get its teeth into. The zombie does not enthrall, but is rather in thrall to "the most basic of needs...the need to feed" (*Resident Evil*, 2002).

However, in his essay, *Is the Rectum a Grave?* Leo Bersani (2009) argues:

the gravely dysfunctional aspect of what is, after all, the healthy pleasure in the operation of a coordinated and strong physical organism is the temptation to deny the perhaps equally strong appeal of powerlessness...(p. 24)

Bersani (2009) goes on to clarify that his definition of powerlessness is not the same as passivity, but rather a "radical disintegration" of the self. If the vampires' sexiness is

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

domination, then the allure of the zombie lies in disintegration. Of course, the vampire does induce a kind of powerlessness in its victims, through an intensity of pleasure and the identification that can occur between master and slave. In the Coppola's 1992 film *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, the character Renfield yields to Dracula's will, succumbing to a monstrous shadow. When next we see him, he is in an unraveled state: raving, helpless and besotted.

However, even as he sits amidst the horrors of a Victorian era bedlam, Renfield comforts himself by envisioning the day that his all-powerful master will grant him immortality and a place by his side. He says, "I am here to do your bidding, Master. I am your slave, and you will reward me." Renfield, thus still enjoys and experiences power through deferred possibility, as well as an identification with the powerful and terrible Dracula. The zombie, in contrast, offers nothing to its victim but the disintegration of self, with both the zombie and its victim (and the viewer-as-victim) stripped to the most basic characteristics, eradicating the possibility of identity or even identification.

Roughly forty minutes into *Resident Evil*, the first filmic reboot of the zombie genre at the turn of the 21st century, we are introduced to the viral horde as it surrounds the film's protagonists. As the characters begin to realize the graveness of their situation, these chilling scenes demonstrate to the audience myriad ways in which a body can be destroyed, dismantled, and dissolved and *yet remain mobile*. Close-up shots of zombies walking on broken limbs, shattered bones protruding from flesh, feet twisted at impossible angles, swarm the viewers' gaze. This brief montage culminates in a shot of a zombie as it turns from profile to full on, revealing a face in which half has been jaggedly carved away (Fig. 4, below). These shots are viscerally evocative, not only because they are gruesome, but because they illustrate, in full



Figure 4: *Resident Evil* (2002)

digital glory, the horror that violence and decay perpetuates upon the body, a horror that the zombie is not only powerless against but doomed to reproduce. Although this horror is mitigated in earlier zombie films, such as Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*⁷, with lighting and music effects, the zombie cannot master these signs of death.

And it is not a vulnerability that is simply against external ravages, but a powerlessness against its own basic needs and drives. The zombie will destroy itself in its need to feed, whether by comic mishap or at the hands of those it pursues. It has no instinct for self-preservation, frankly because the zombie has no self to preserve. We see this exemplified in *Resident Evil* in the interaction between Rane and one of the infected just prior to the introduction of the horde. Rane, a highly trained and well-armed security officer, is approached by what she initially mistakes for a survivor. As Rane attempts to administer aid, the zombie bites her. Rane retaliates with force and ultimately threatens the zombie with a gun. Although even a zombie can be

⁷ In George A. Romero's second film, the first to appear in technicolor, the zombie appears in a somewhat comical matte bluish green special effects make-up and, though there are a few gory moments and the audience is informed through dialogue exposition that these creatures are reanimated dead, the zombies remain mostly physically intact.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

‘killed’ by trauma to the brain, such as a bullet, the zombie advances without even attempting to avoid damage. Neither can the zombie learn, getting up off the floor and continuing her advance after a bullet shatters her leg. Driven by the virus’ drive to proliferate, the “need to feed,” the zombie continues its stalwart progression into annihilation, clearly without even the most rudimentary of egos⁸. This deterritorialization of the subject, from the loss of the basic drive for survival to the loss of structural integrity, a literal tearing away of limbs infects not only the viewer’s gaze. One by one, the members of the protagonist’s party are overwhelmed, torn away to rise again, mutable and implacable.

The notion of the zombie as both psychologically and physically disintegrated is further articulated in the film *28 Days Later* (Boyle, 2003), released just a year after the first *Resident Evil* film. In this film, an outbreak of “viral rage,” spread from an infected chimpanzee, nearly destroys the entire population of the United Kingdom. This viral rage zombie, although typically lacking any sense of self, is not driven to feed, but to destroy. In the opening scenes of the film,

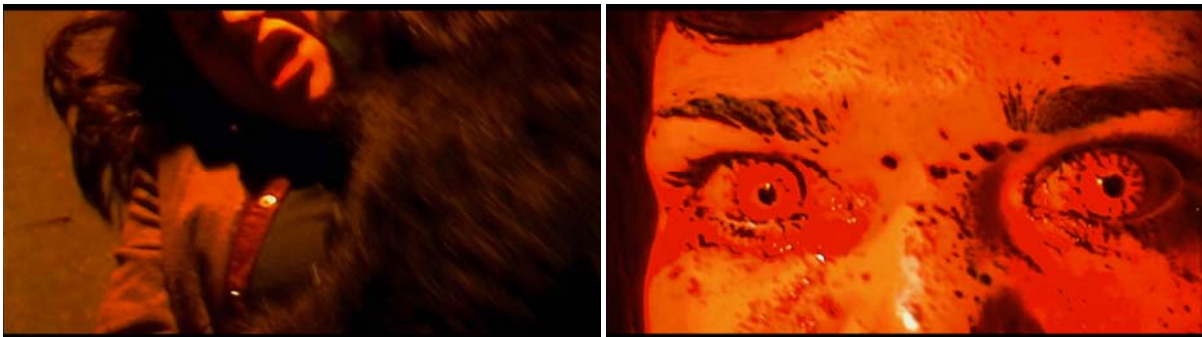


Figure 5: *28 Days Later* (2003)

the audience watches as a female animal rights activist sneaks into a laboratory to rescue the caged animals therein. A chimpanzee, apparently unimpressed by this effort, proceeds to maul her, ripping and biting at the flesh of her face and arms. Almost immediately, she herself begins

⁸ The ego of course being as Freud says first and foremost a bodily ego and thus it would be unsurprising that the zombie which has a body that is in the process of disintegration would not exhibit a psychical ego that would at least structurally constitute a “self” and vice versa.

to exhibit the same disorganized and aggressive behavior, turning on her compatriots and attacking them in the same brutal fashion.

The film manages to structure these scenes in such a way as to maximize the viewer's experience of this contagion and disintegration of self (See Fig. 5, above). From the moment, the chimpanzee leaps from its cage, the scene itself dissolves into a series of quick and chaotic cuts, flashes of ripping flesh and screaming. The otherwise low-lit scene is occasionally punctuated with flashes of red light from the alarm. The quick cuts jumping between the chimpanzee, the victim and the other characters attempting to rescue the victim and contain the infected animal offer a disjointed and disorganized point of view that cannot settle on a linear narrative. It is even unclear the identity of the antagonist and the protagonist, switching from the chimpanzee to the activist without a direct connection, signified only by a quick close-up of her infected red eyes. As with Alice in *Resident Evil* (Anderson, 2002) the concomitant suturing allows the viewer a glimpse into a subject that has come undone. This kind of scene is common to most contemporary zombie films, wherein the camera becomes a zombified gaze. Thus, the bite of the viral zombie carries with it the complete and utter destruction of the subject as it had previously been experienced, or experienced itself. And the zombie film often offers to the viewer a means to experience, rather than simply observe, this disintegration. But it is not merely the disintegration of self that is vital to this viral zombie, but the queer refusal to create a new stable subject, to close off the line of becoming.

One of the more compelling and unexpected examples of queer refusal is the 2008 film *Otto; Or Up with Dead People*, directed by Bruce LaBruce. From the start, *Otto* deviates from popular zombie horror-action films in that it involves both comedic and pornographic elements⁹.

⁹ This film was released several years before the popular films like *Warm Bodies* (2013), that focus on individual zombies. However, unlike Bruce La Bruce's work, these popular films create sympathy for the zombie by depicting

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

This film involves neither pandemics nor hordes, but rather a singular zombie phenomenon, named Otto. While Otto retains his capacity to interact with others without the more typical dismembering, he still presents with a significant disintegration of self and isolation from societal investments. The scenes shot from Otto's perspective are fragmented and chaotic, jerking between scenes ranging from fantastical and violent, to quotidian, to completely indecipherable, all fraught with the discordant sound of an electric guitar. Otto is no stable subject, with limited to no understanding of who or what he is, what is happening, or even what he is experiencing. The viewer-as-Otto is also unstable, an ever-shifting conglomeration of memory, impulse and image dissolving to its most basic components. The film offers no explanations for what happened to Otto, who he was and what he will become. It is even unclear as to whether Otto is a 'real' zombie (as in a reanimated and infectious corpse), leaving viewers in limbo, contested but never answered.

Nor can any of the other characters assign him a category. In the movie, Otto meets a man outside of "Flesh," a zombie-themed gay club. The man steps outside of the club just as Otto walks by, mistaking him for a would-be patron, complimenting him on the verisimilitude of his outfit down to the authenticity of his stench. He convinces Otto to avoid the "dead scene" inside by going back to his apartment, again disrupting the assumption of Otto as deceased, beyond the drive for sex. Once inside, Otto and his interlocutor begin kissing aggressively, transitioning to biting. The scene fades to black and the next scene opens abruptly onto the bed, walls, and floor covered in blood. Otto is sitting next to what appears to be the motionless body of the man he had been kissing/biting, also covered in blood. Although it initially appears that we

the zombie as basically human and simply wanting, like all humans, to be loved. Thus, rather than embracing the queer failure of the zombie, these films pander to a superficial and naïve notion of diversity without really taking up any real or challenging ideas of radical difference.



Figure 6: Otto; Or, Up with Dead People (2008)

are at last going to get a satisfactory answer regarding Otto's zombiism, as Otto leaves, the man begins to speak perfectly normally, asking if he can see him again. Unlike Otto, who shambles stiffly and whose eyes have a pale, almost cataracted look, the man's eyes and movements are unhindered and he appears healthy (Fig. 6, above), aside from the fact that his intestines that are strewn across his chest and abdomen. In this shot, shown in the still below, it is unknown, to either the viewer or Otto, whether Otto has infected and reanimated him, has killed him and is imagining this conversation, or whether he is imagining the carnage and the man is perfectly intact. And, ultimately, as the film progresses, the viewer comes to see as Otto, and the viewer-as-Otto appreciates that these distinctions do not really matter.

The film, while obviously a film about Otto, simultaneously revolves around the fictional production of another film entitled "Up with Dead People" directed by Madea Yarn. Madea aspires to create a pornographic film that focuses on a violent uprising of gay male zombies rebelling against the intolerance and disgust of society. This set-up of a film within a film, shifting between Otto's unstable reality and the scene within a scene, further disrupts the linear

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

narrative and places in opposition Madea's project, which has perspective, and Otto's experience, which has none. Madea first meets Otto when he auditions for *Up with Dead People*. She is immediately drawn to her perception of him as a marginalized, mentally ill, gay boy who is, as she describes to the camera, "lonely, empty, dead inside...willing to go to any extreme to feel something..." (LaBruce 2008). For Otto, however, the film is simply a means to hide in plain sight so that, in the presence of cameras, he would be taken for an actor, an imitation, not an actual zombie.

After casting him, Madea struggles to incorporate Otto into her grand vision. Unlike the other actors she has cast, Otto does not respond to her bombastic directing style or her bullying, nor does he offer her an identity which she can easily commodify. We see this tension during the production of the scene with which Bruce LaBruce opens *Otto; Or, Up with Dead People*. At first, we only see the scene as Madea intends it to be viewed, rendered in black and white with narration voiced by her. As we see Otto dig himself out of a grave inscribed with his name and shamble through a crumbling graveyard we hear Madea attempt to create a genesis theory for Otto, an origin that he neither remembers nor asks for. She goes on describe the evolution of rational, revolutionary zombie, again attempting to give Otto a context, a meaning, and a purpose. Later, we see the making of this scene and witness the comical juxtaposition between Madea's direction and the blankness that Otto exhibits as he emerges. As he raises his hand out of the grave Madea urges him in a practiced and dramatic speech to "raise it out of the grave...raise it in protest against all the injustices perpetrated against your kind" (LaBruce, 2008) until Otto has emerged completely sitting up in the grave and letting the dirt fall away from him in a passionless and anti-climactic display. In this way Otto appears to resist incorporation into the system of meaning that Madea has created with narration and plot, but not through the

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

insistence on an alternative positive identity or even actively rejecting the identity she attempts to create for him but by abjectly offering Madea nothing in return for her investment.

As psychologists, of the human science persuasion or otherwise, we are trained to associate the development of a positive identity with health, with the good, and are likely inclined to side with Madea. It is considered ‘common sense’ that we must uphold and encourage this identity development as an important goal or developmental milestone. This is an almost reflexive response which, while it comes from good intentions as an attempt to undo some of the historical damage that the field has done in terms of pathologizing any sexual expression that falls outside of the confines of heteronormativity, does not address the ways in which this reinforcement or production of identity necessarily blocks and excludes possibilities. The production of a fixed identity then cuts us and our patients off from the possibility of new affects of which they may be capable and, ultimately blocks the flow of desire. It is a system that shunts the flow of desire toward those things that are associated with the fixed identity and away from those that do not. So, as with Madea, there are certain affects, experiences, relations that are disallowed and disavowed. A patient simply cannot remain unidentified, they must find something to call themselves and if they do not, then that is their pathology. However, if we allow ourselves to tarry with Otto’s position, if we hold back from labelling him sick, lost, or incomplete we may be able to follow the flows of desire where they lead, rather than attempting to harness them toward the production of a normative, identified subject.

The tension between Otto and Madea’s scenes in the film map onto the tensions between queer theorizing that centers upon the liberation and assertion of positive queer identity and the radical negativity which disrupts the very notion of identity. Madea, despite her self-proclaimed desire to create a revolutionary film about an uprising of gay zombies that forcible recruit men

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

into the homosexual horde, is herself clearly and aggressively invested in identity. What we see of her film is more self-conscious manifesto than a filmic portrayal of the theories from which she draws. Whereas Otto, despite his initial description of himself as having an “identity crisis,” moves through the events of the film without a meaning or purpose beyond, perhaps, his immediate survival. He never settles on or attaches to any identity nor is he concerned with the identities that others have cultivated. As a result, Madea cannot even employ Otto’s identity as an antagonistic prop to her so-called ‘radical’ identity and/or project, because he offers none. This lack of investment is exhibited most clearly in the final scene of the film, in which Otto, having indulged Madea’s final spectacle in which he pretends to self-immolate in response to a cruel and uncaring world, leaves the project. When Madea asks him what he will do next, he does not offer her any vision of his future or desire for self-discovery and autonomy, but merely states that he will go north where the cold might slow his decay. Thus, Otto achieves the radicality that Madea attempts to claim but can only imitate without ever having to proclaim himself a radical. Otto escapes from the human subject rather than laying claim to any identity, oppositional or normative.

Of course, most viral zombie films portray deterritorialization through the destruction of physical structures and living populations. The film *Resident Evil* (2002), which takes place at the beginning of the zombie pandemic before the contagion escaped into the general population, shows just such a movement within the Hive research facility. We witness an unidentified thief removing vials from a laboratory and, as they abscond with the vials which we later discover contained the T-virus, they toss a vial onto the floor and causing it to break open, exposing its liquid contents to the air. It immediately becomes airborne and escapes into an air vent. The camera follows the path of the airborne infection until it passes through a vent that opens onto a

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

familiar office scene. We see professionals in business attire walk quickly and purposefully through crowded hallways to offices and elevators. In the background, we hear a computerized voice giving instructions via overhead speakers to the office-workers below. In many ways, this scene is reminiscent of that famous scene in *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) mentioned in the introduction; wherein zombies shamble through the mall while annoying music plays on the PA system overhead. However, in the *Resident Evil* scene, the zombie is not a representation or imitation of the human conformity, instead the zombie virus disrupts the relations of professionalism and conformity that these humans have developed to the office, to the Umbrella Corporation, and to each other.

Almost immediately after the T-virus is released, the Hive's artificially intelligent security system called the Red Queen, triggered by the detection of contagion, begins to systematically eliminate all life within the facility. Within this montage of scenes, we see a group of researchers/technicians sealed inside a watertight laboratory when the computer controlled sprinkler system goes off. Initially they scramble obediently to protect their work and attempt to shut down the sprinklers. However, once they realize that the sprinklers are not going to turn off and that the water, having nowhere to go, will continue to rise they abandon their laboratory duties and attempt to escape. Similarly, when a group of office-workers become trapped on an elevator, their first response is obedient and socialized. A woman who emerges as the leader tells everyone to remain calm and attempts to reach someone through the emergency call button. However, not long into their captivity the group hears screaming and the sound of an elevator plummeting several floors before crashing to the bottom of the shaft, which precipitates a failed attempt by the self-appointed leader to pry open the doors and climb out of the elevator which is stuck between two floors. As she attempts to wriggle out of the elevator it begins to lurch and

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

then plummet, decapitating her when the floor of the elevator passes the ceiling of the upper floor with her head and neck still outside of the partially open elevator doors. In both examples, there is a “freeing up of relations” (Parr 2010, p. 68) between the Hive and its inhabitants in which the office-workers are no longer working within the Hive but against the Hive and vice versa. While, in these examples, it is the computer security system known as the Red Queen who enacts the destruction, it is the virus that triggers this deterritorialization and irrevocably alters the relations that constitute this territory.



Figure 7: *Resident Evil* (2002)

At the end of the film and in subsequent installments of the *Resident Evil* franchise, we see the spread of the zombie virus which deterritorializes on a global scale. The final scene of the first film (See Fig. 7, above) which also begins the sequel *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* (2004) shows Alice emerging from an abandoned medical facility onto the ruins of Raccoon City under which the Hive had been built. The street she steps out on is completely devoid of life and strewn with debris and crashed, burnt out cars and buses. The film cuts between close-up shots of Alice

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

and her environment: a piece of garbage, an empty bus, a broken window on a police car. We see the movement of the deterritorialization from Alice's perspective; a landscape that no longer offers the familiar relations between cars and people, traffic and buildings, law enforcement and the populace. Instead the scene ends with the camera panning out from Alice (See Fig. 7 above), who is dwarfed by the surrounding landscape so that we cannot differentiate her from the rest of the debris, offering the viewer an expanse in which the human has been displaced and de-emphasized.

In *28 Days Later* (2002) deterritorialization is expressed less through destroyed landscapes and more through depopulated and abandoned ones. The protagonist, Jim, wakes up in a hospital, twenty-eight days after the rage virus has been released, and slowly realizes that he is completely alone. Unlike in the end of the first *Resident Evil* film there are no overt signs of destruction; the hospital and cityscape outside are merely disheveled as if everyone has left in a hurry which we later discover is precisely what happened following an official call for evacuation. As Jim wanders through the empty halls of the hospital and later the streets of post-outbreak London objects and spaces take on an uncanny quality. We watch Jim make his way to the exit of the hospital and tension builds for him and the audience at the subtle signs of his isolation: a vacant waiting area containing a few overturned chairs and a wall of payphones with the receivers left hanging permanently off the hook. The camera cuts from the receivers to Jim squatting over a pile of soda cans that had fallen on the floor when he or someone before him broke into the vending machine. As he drinks a can of Pepsi with the logo prominently displayed we are, of course, reminded of corporate advertising in film. However, this scene also speaks to the clearing away of structures and infrastructures that would have previously organized his life and his relation to his environment. We see how quickly in this space deterritorialized by the

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

sudden abandonment anyone who remains must relate in a new way, by becoming a scavenger, becoming a nomad. Like the disintegration of the body which is also a dissolution of the psychic structures of the subject, the material deterritorialization of the space is also a deterritorialization of the social, political, and even familial structures that had previously ordered the space.

Jim leaves the hospital and enters onto the streets of London and meets more of the same profound isolation. As the film continues to follow his journey through the city there are an increasing number of wide shots of Jim against the backdrop of the buildings and main



Figure 8: 28 Days Later (2003)

thoroughfares in which only his tiny figure is the only human movement we see. The visual stillness in the hospital and as he walks across Westminster bridge is echoed by the near silence of these scenes, interrupted occasionally by the subtle sounds of his footsteps. He continues to the city center where the absence of other humans becomes even more jarring as we see him walk down the middle of streets that should be racing or congested with traffic along a background of billboards, traffic lights and buildings that no longer serve any human function.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

As the desertedness of the city becomes more apparent and the space becomes uncannier (see Fig. 8, above) we hear the beginning guitar riffs of *East Hastings* (1997) performed by Godspeed, You! Black Emperor. It is a purely instrumental score that begins softly, slowly, and with a single instrument and builds in volume, tempo and diversity of sound until it reaches a cacophonous crescendo. The crescendo corresponds with his discovery of a kiosk that reveals the sudden evacuation as well as the panic and death that preceded it. In the scenes, we see how the absence of human movement and sound transforms spaces that are still populated with the productions of humanity. Before reaching the kiosk, Jim sets off the car alarm in the deserted city. He jerks away from the source of the alarm but soon understands that there will be no response, the alarm no longer holds the same meaning in relation to him and to the world around him that it did prior to the outbreak.

This shift is only intensified once the film introduces “others” into the stillness of the mostly abandoned city. The film cuts from the kiosk scene to a down shot of a large wooden cross and we see Jim enter from outside, seeking asylum in a church, perhaps hoping to find comfort in familiarity and tradition. However, this hope is quickly extinguished as he explores further and is met with a wall of graffiti that reads in large black letters: “THE END IS EXTREMELY FUCKING NIGH.” The image of graffiti is immediately followed by a cut to Jim’s horrifying discovery of pews overflowing with corpses piled on top of one another. The audience gets a sense of the scale of scene as the camera pans around, as if there are too many to fit into we-as-Jim’s field of vision. He calls out, searching for any survivors among the dead and his “hello?” elicits a response of growls and pounding from just off-screen. Jim follows the sounds and is met with a priest in his vestments walking toward him in a strange, jerky fashion and lunges forward to attack him and the audience realizes he is infected. Not only has the

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

assumption that a body that appears human will engage in a human to human relation been disrupted, but the relations of another socio-political organization has been cleared away. As Jim flees the church he is pursued by a horde of infected that he disturbed as he called out for survivors. His calling out revealed a new relation, the relation between the infected and those who are not. His flight from the horde is soon interrupted by a pair of uninfected humans. They attack the horde with Molotov cocktails engulfing them in flames and, as the burning infected continue to pursue them, we are reminded once again that the zombie virus does not simply clear the material and social structures but also the subjects of those it infects.

Even once Jim finds himself in relative safety with other uninfected humans, nothing resembles what he had previously known. They inform him that there is no government, no social order or security, only the hordes outside and the three of them. The presence of others as he travels through the city along defunct railroad tracks only seems to highlight the absence of the structures and relations that had organized his life before. Though his new companions reluctantly agree to travel to his family home, Jim finds no comfort there. He, instead, discovers the badly decomposed remains of his parents who died by their own hands rather than join the infected or their victims. Later that evening, Jim attempts to comfort himself and thus, the audience through memories of his parents. The scene begins with a shot of the kitchen which cuts to a close-up of Jim's face and then cuts to the same kitchen lit up with daylight as a smiling Jim interacts with his living parents, cuing the audience that we are witnessing Jim's memory/imaginings of his home. The film cuts several times between shots of Jim in the 'present' of the film and a mundane scene of unloading groceries with his father and mother. Jim, in the present, even responds aloud to his father in the past. We can think of both the return to his family home as well as his attempting to return in memory as an attempt to block the

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

movement of deterritorialization, to resurrect the world that once was. “Memories always have a reterritorializing function” (Deleuze & Guattari 1980, p. 294) and through this series of shots that absorbs our gaze into his, we are also ‘remembering’ and taking part in this reproduction from the past that is, through cinema, made present to us. Both Jim and the viewer begin to re-establish themselves as proper, Oedipal subjects immersed in the familiar mommy-daddy-me triad within which one locates that lack which forms the basis for desire.

But Jim’s memory is suddenly interrupted as the film cuts from his face. Instead of cutting back to the memory the camera cuts to a shaky shot from outside of the house as one of the infected bursts in. Thus, we also experience the failure of reterritorialization as the zombie erupts into the scene. What is more, the shot-reverse shot of the house from the outside and then the face of the zombie that has burst in through the window, has also positioned us to adopt the ‘perspective’ of the zombie. And so, we are also that which interrupts, that which clears away the Oedipalized subject that we via Jim, had just returned to. The camera pans out as one of Jim’s companions is attacked. He looks on in horror as the second survivor, Selena, beats the exposed survivor to death with a bat in response to the possibility of infection. She explains that the infected will attack anyone regardless of the relation that they had once; no matter if they were friends or parents or siblings. She confirms what we-as-Jim had already come to suspect: there will be no return home or even a return to the world that had once been familiar.

While the process of deterritorialization is significant in the imagery and the narratives of films like *28 Days Later* and the *Resident Evil* franchise, these films still seem to cling to the world as it was before. They both begin at the beginning of the zombie apocalypse, thus establishing that this is a departure from a world that was, at one point, uninfected. In *28 Days Later*, there is the addition of a sort of mournful homage paid to the world that has been lost,

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

what Colebrook calls out as a “nostalgia” for the human. The early scenes with Jim show images of culturally significant and meaningful spaces and architectural works. Like the famous scene of the Statue of Liberty sticking out of the sand at the end of *Planet of the Apes* (1968), these icons not only evoke that feeling of uncanniness but also sadness and longing for what has come before. This also comes through in the ways in which these films often refer to a time before.

One of the few zombie films that manages to avoid this trend within the genre was an independent film released in 2012 entitled *The Battery* (Gardner). In contrast to the films mentioned above, the film begins an indeterminate amount of time after the outbreak. At no point are we told of the source or cause of the outbreak either in the form of flashbacks or the speculations of the characters. The film focuses almost exclusively on two characters Mickey and Ben, a pitcher and a catcher (the assemblage they form together is called a battery) on a minor league baseball team. All we are given by way of exposition is that the outbreak began while Mickey and Ben were traveling from away game in another state. And thus, what should have been a relatively short road trip was transformed into an interminable trek. This film embraces the deterritorialization of “post-dead” landscape with the perpetual movement of these two characters without any reference to past markers or any special or significant place or object toward which they are moving. There are several montages scattered throughout the film that create this sense of perpetual movement. Toward the beginning of the film, there is a montage of the two men walking through various houses and buildings all of which are sort of nondescript in their commonness as well as in the cinematographic choice not to focus on any interesting or significant structural details. Other montages show them walking through a field or driving in the car past endless trees and telephone poles that line the unmarked road. One of the few times they go to a place that holds some personal significance for Mickey, the home of an ex-girlfriend,

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

only comes about because they were driving close by, on the way to nowhere in particular. This house, like the others that served as the background to the other scenes and montages, is also empty and nondescript. This part of the film begins with a shot of Mickey sitting on the edge of a bed staring at a blank, banally mint green wall and cuts to Ben who is unceremoniously rummaging through the garage for anything useful and settles on spark plugs, some bedding and a pair of lawn chairs. Though Mickey might have been hoping to find something here, it is obvious by this scene that the process of deterritorialization has cleared away that which Mickey might have found comfort or meaning.

Ben, the catcher component of this battery, like the tone of the film, also seems to embrace the deterritorialized cartography in which he finds himself. He has no qualms with the endless need for movement away from the zombie hordes as opposed to some fixed future place or state. He appears to enjoy scavenging and killing zombies and is not only uninterested in, but is avidly opposed to looking for, meeting, or interacting with survivors. He is content with having Mickey to play catch with. Even in the moments of the film when the pair are resting, Ben does not use this time to reflect nostalgically. During one of these scenes of rest, Mickey scratches reams of lottery tickets as the two sits in the shade of the forest. Ben mocks him for getting excited when he ‘wins’ the scratch-off, stating that money is pointless now. He instead tries to encourage a game of catch to which Mickey retorts that baseball is also pointless. But, as the ever-ready Ben replies, “baseball is fun, I thought that was the point.” In this exchange, we come to understand much of why Ben is so easily adapted to this clearing away of structures. Even though Ben has trained and competed in the sport of baseball, for him, it was never really a means to the end of winning. It is something he does for the enjoyment of the thing itself, movement for movement’s sake. In the absence of any symbolic or imaginary significance, Ben

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

continues to delight in Mickey's beautiful pitches and form as they play. He enjoys the relational movement of the battery without the structure of the game.

In the absence of a traditional narrative of the zombie film genre in which characters progress toward the hope of survivors or a place without infection, the primary tension in the film is between Ben's embrace of deterritorialization and Mickey's resistance to it. This tension speaks to the tension that always exists within the process of deterritorialization between continual shifting and the risk of the process becoming blocked. From the first moments of the film, we come to understand Mickey as an agent of, or at least a proponent of blocking the deterritorialization of the viral zombie apocalypse. The film opens with a close-up shot of Mickey wearing headphones, bobbing his head to the music. The audience hears nothing except the music, as if we too are wearing headphones. For a few minutes, we might think that this is a scene from *before* an outbreak until Ben suddenly bursts out of a door behind him yelling "GO, GO, GO!" before the film cuts to the title screen followed by the scavenging montage described in the previous paragraph.

As the film continues, it becomes clear that Mickey's headphones are a form of blocking, an attempt to block out the zombie apocalypse, to pretend that nothing is happening and to remain himself unchanged and linked to the world he had once lived in. And, as when we share the gaze of the other characters, by hearing what Mickey alone can hear, we are also blocked from and blocking the movement of deterritorialization. Chapter 10 in *A Thousand Plateaus* addresses music and its relation to refrain, the part of the song that is repeated. "The refrain is rather a means of preventing music...Music is a creative, active operation that consists of deterritorializing the refrain" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, p. 300). Like Jim's attempt to return through memory that we discussed earlier in the chapter, Mickey listening to the same songs on

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

repeat blocks the possibility of deterritorialization or music. Ben points out the dangers inherent in this sensory blocking by sneaking up on Mickey, pretending to be a zombie. When Ben interrupts Mickey's music in this and the opening scene he is deterritorializing the refrain (Fig. 9, below).



Figure 9: *The Battery* (2012)

It is not, of course, the listening to music itself or the coupling with technology that is inherently a movement of blocking or a source of alienation (a criticism of human use of technology often leveled by the field of psychology). It is the way he uses it, listening to the same music on repeat, engaging in this coupling to the exclusion of all others and thus blocking himself in. Not long after this Ben intensifies this interruption by taking away Mickey's headphones all together. In this scene that follows, we see and hear Ben wearing Mickey's headphones and listening to a song comically entitled *Anthem for the Already Defeated* (Rock Plaza Central, 2006). In this scene, Ben does not use the song as a refrain but rather gives himself over to the music, as we witness him dance with wild abandon (Fig. 10, below). Ben is

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED



Figure 10: The Battery (2012)

interrupted by the sound of a zombie outside, and he responds by taking off his headphones and stalking off to investigate. When he finds a zombie tied to a tree, Ben is inspired with what he feels might be a way to force Mickey to accept what is happening. He drags the zombie to the room where Mickey is sleeping and locks the door. Mickey is finally forced to fight and kill the zombie rather than avoid it by hiding behind Ben's baseball bat or through his headphones. Mickey must finally face the music.

Mickey also attempts to block this clearing by longing for and, at one point, actively pursuing a community of survivors with whom he can 'play house.' One day, as Mickey is flipping through different frequencies on his walkie talkie he accidentally intercepts an exchange between two survivors, one of whom is a female survivor code-named Annie. However, when he tries to speak with her and to ask about 'the orchard' (the code-name for their compound), she tells him not to come looking for them and quickly changes radio frequencies. From this point on, much to Ben's chagrin, Mickey becomes obsessed with finding 'Annie' and 'the orchard.' It is obvious to Ben, the viewer, and even 'Annie' that Mickey's fantasy of 'the orchard' is a place that is untouched by the zombie outbreak with a 'real' house and technology. But Annie warns him that "it's not what you think" (Gardner 2012). Another structure which Mickey is attempting to resurrect through his search for 'the orchard' and 'Annie' is the heteronormative couple that Annie could make possible. Ben laughs at Mickey when he realizes this. He says, "You think she

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

is gonna be some sexy farmer's daughter." For Ben, however, his desire is that 'Annie' might be is "a bull-dyke with calves like canned hams." Mickey attempts to block the process of deterritorialization by seeking out domestication, the familial, the Oedipal while Ben is doing all that he can to avoid it.

Ultimately, however, despite all of Mickey's attempts to block his own process of deterritorialization, he fails along with all the structures to which he clings. When Mickey finally meets Annie, she does not bring him back to 'the orchard' but instead holds the pair at gunpoint, shooting and wounding Ben's leg in the process. She goes one step further and eliminates the possibility that Mickey might follow her by taking and throwing their car keys in a field next to the road. Not only does Mickey fail to retrieve his life before the outbreak, he also fails to retrieve the keys before a zombie horde discovers them. He and Ben become trapped in an immobile car that they very realistically have no idea how to hotwire. Thus, not only did the blocking via return to the familiar and domestic fail, but they failed to block that one, final deterritorialization: the failure to survive the zombie apocalypse.

The connection between failure, queerness, and even deterritorialization, is something that Halberstam explores in her work, *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), on the intersection of queer theory and what she dubs "low theory." For her failure is a 'queer art' because failure disrupts the basic assumptions about what is valuable or important and makes room for an alternative. The subversive potential of failure overlaps with and, she ventures, may be central to the subversive and radical potential of the queer. We see this throughout the zombie genre, and even in the zombie itself whose failure to 'memento mori' coupled with its failure to live or affirm life is part of what gives it its infectious allure and its destructive/deterritorializing capacity. Though Halberstam herself does not refer to Deleuze's and Guattari's concept of

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

deterritorialization and is, in fact, critical of what she views as the masculinist and heteronormative thrust toward something resembling progressiveness, I would argue that her notion of failure is one way in which the process of deterritorialization can be expressed or operationalized and that her critique is better aimed at the ways in which the notion of becoming is taken up rather than what is inherent to the Deleuze's and Guattari's theory. This pattern of blocking and the subsequent failure that is a further deterritorialization is present in all the films discussed thus far and is the distinction between zombie films and the horror genre in general and the action or adventure genres. What makes the horror film genre so scary and rife with sequels is the fact that, generally the characters do not prevail. Even when it appears that they have the ghost often reappears, the character realizes their escape was a dream, the slasher steps from some place off screen to watch them escape, etc. Or, as Cohen so succinctly put it in his introduction to *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (1996), "the monster always escapes" and thus, the humans always fail to escape.

We see this unfold in *28 Days Later* (Boyle, 2003), beginning when Selena and Jim meet up with a father and his daughter, we begin to see a turn from Selena's pugilistic stance of kill or be killed and her resistance to the notion that Jim and she should want to "fall in love and fuck" back to an Oedipal family structure. In this structure, the father holds a position of benevolent authority as well as matchmaker for Selena and Jim with a jovial paternalism. The scene that most clearly highlights this attempt at blocking is when the party stops in the English countryside. The visual center is an old tree, a reference to the 'family tree'. This focal point (Fig. 11 below) echoes the thematic action of the film. It is a representation of Oedipal, domestic, and filial structures at the top of the hierarchy, subordinating all other relations that might radiate from it. We see Selena and Jim walk across the shot talking intimately under the paternalistic

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

gaze of the father. He then turns away from the pair to see a group of recently wild horses galloping and playing in a valley below. He smiles at them and anthropomorphizes aloud, pronouncing the three horses a family and gives them his blessing with a kiss. This scene is



Figure 11: 28 Days Later (2003)

meant to evoke a sense of comfort, that everything will someday be as it once was. However, it is not long after that we witness the failure of the father when he is unexpectedly infected when a drop of blood drips from a hanging corpse and into his eye. Only moments after the family is established, we witness as the father changes almost immediately into an enraged zombie and is subsequently shot.

Despite this horrifying failure, there is still yet another moment of attempted blocking that occurs at the end of the film, or at least one of the endings. The end of the film occurs after the three survivors escaped from a group of military men who, in their own attempt to block deterritorialization, had formed a miniature fascist state amid the outbreak. In the U.S. release, the film ends with Jim who was badly injured in the escape waking up in a cottage to the sounds

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

of Selena stitching together drapes and sheets, in a classic domestic arrangement, to create a message that can be seen from the sky. This version of the film ends with a helicopter flying across the landscape, revealing throngs of dying infected and eventually coming across the signal that Selena stitched. While this may appear as an unqualified success it is important to remember that, following even this ending¹⁰, there is a sequel, *28 Weeks Later* (Fernadilla, 2007). In the



Figure 12: *28 Weeks Later* (2007)

sequel, the viral zombie not only re-emerges and eliminates the survivors that had since been returned to what was thought to be a contained area but makes its way through the Tube and into Paris, and thus, all of Europe (Fig. 12, above). The failure to contain and stop the spread of the zombie virus is again, the failure that opens onto further deterritorialization.

The *Resident Evil* franchise is, of course, built on the failure of the protagonists to block the zombie virus. In nearly every installment, the film ends with Alice's failure to overcome the zombies, her enemies at Umbrella Corporation, and the infection of her comrades in arms. Most

¹⁰ In the UK and European release of the film, the two surviving female characters are unable to save Jim's life and the film ends in the makeshift operating theater with Jim's death and thus the failure of the return to the Oedipal family triangle with Jim as father/savior. We see the two women walk away, toward nothing at all.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

notably, the first installment ends with Alice's failure to rescue Rane. Rane is bitten toward the beginning of their movements through the Hive and Alice continues to drag her along (at one point literally, when she is no longer able to walk) with the promise of an anti-virus. However, the anti-virus is administered too late. Rane dies from the infection and then gets up, cracks her neck and attacks Alice and the other survivor as they attempt to escape the Hive. In keeping with this trend, even after they manage to reach the surface of the Hive alive, Alice and the survivor are both taken into custody by the Umbrella Corporation and infected with the T-Virus for military research. As with the failure to block the movement of deterritorialization in *28 Days Later* (Boyle, 2003), this failure opens onto a further deterritorialization and the failure to remain human and intact. But, again, we must understand failure as that which clears the space for a proliferative subjectivity. If Alice is our patient, then this understanding is only that much more important. To frame these failures as the interruption of health and viability would be to ignore the new relations and connections that the ending of this first film opens onto. This theoretical perspective on failure would also serve us in our understanding of our own praxis with Alice or any other patient. In this conceptualization, therapeutic and clinical failures might be the very crux of therapy. For as symptoms, developmental myths, techniques, transferences fail they make room for those symptoms, myths and relations that are still to come.

The film *Otto; Or, Up with Dead People* (LaBruce, 2008), stands out from the other films because it does not involve an apocalyptic zombie outbreak. However, the pattern of blocking and failure are still present in the film. We discussed previously the tension between Madea and Otto and her attempt to appropriate and capitalize on Otto by attempting to contain his queer, zombie subjectivity within a stable, political identity. This, of course, is an attempt at blocking and, as we know this attempt ultimately fails. However, there are points in the film where Otto

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

himself attempts to block the process of deterritorialization when he attempts to remember and reconnect with his past and those he knew before he became a zombie. He finds a phone number in his pocket and experiences a flash of memory of him and his boyfriend. He calls him and arranges a meeting, but, when he does attempt to talk to him he fails to experience the connection he had before. As his ex-boyfriend speaks he attempts, like Madea, to create an explanatory narrative for who he was and how he appears now. The explanation offered by his ex-boyfriend cuts in and out as Otto's attention drifts or is distorted by the violent visual-audio experience of everything washed in bright fuchsia and discordant sounds of electric guitar and static, but the audience can hear enough to piece together a loose Oedipal explanation that involves his father who is a butcher. Otto, when offered the choice to remember or to forget, rejects the memories and the explanations and ultimately decides to shoot a final scene for Madea and go north. A psychologist or psychoanalyst would likely hail the recollection of his father and the connection to his sexuality as a breakthrough and lament the subsequent rejection as nothing more than a defensive denial, a regression or a 'step back' in his therapeutic treatment. However, were he or she to let go their normative goal of (re)production of a stable human subject, then Otto's forgetting could be understood as a resistance to a reductive conceptualization of his experience. Halberstam, in his book, privileges forgetting as a type of failure which has the special capacity to disrupt and clear away the subject as such, release them from their organization around narrative and their relation to progress and cohesion. While she uses the character Dori, from *Finding Nemo*, whose memories only last for a few minutes, Otto in this film, and the zombie in general, are also similarly without narrative or the cohesion of a so-called stable subject.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

Though the zombie promises nothing, this is not to say that the zombie *does* nothing. The zombie queers the structures with which it interacts if by queering we also mean clearing, i.e. deterritorialization and vice versa. The zombie deterritorializes the social, political, and material structures and the relations within and between structures in its wake without imposing a new subject, order or structure. As discussed in the introduction, zombie ontology is a flat ontology and so the zombie destroys/consumes indiscriminately, a movement that flattens hierarchies, erases demarcations and explodes categories. Thus, we return to the allure of the zombie being the opposite of mastery and identification, but rather disintegration. This disintegration, like, in conjunction with, and potentially opened by the clearing of physical and socio-political structures in the zombie film, can be understood as a deterritorialization of the subject itself. And what is more, this deterritorialization of the subject does not have to be related to physical contact with or infection by the zombie. Living with the post-dead in the physical and psychic space that the zombie clears can be sufficient.



Figure 13: *The Battery* (2012)

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

At the end of *The Battery*, there is a final montage, which chronicles the events following Ben and Mickey being trapped in the car, Mickey being bitten as he attempted to find the keys, and Ben shooting him to prevent his own infection. After he shoots Mickey, Ben, still wounded from the gunshot inflicted by ‘Annie,’ is trapped inside the car with the now decomposing corpse of the other component of the battery. The montage shows him slowly unraveling in close-up as the daylight fades into night repeatedly. At first, we see him search for liquid to stave off dehydration. He drinks the water from canned food he opens and, eventually, what appears to be his own urine. Eventually, we see him begin to scream, and cry, and finally laugh. In the final moments of the film, Ben methodically dismantles a baseball, starting with the laces and the white skin, until he reveals the ball of what appears to be rubber string which he also unravels, a visual metonymy of his own deterritorialization (See Fig. 13, above). Once the ball is completely undone, Ben gets on the radio to Annie and informs her that he will be coming for her and opens the car door. As he limps on his bad leg with a baseball bat in hand, a zombie horde shambling behind him, he seems to become one of them: a contagion that is not purely biological but just as compelling (See Fig. 14, below).



Figure 14: *The Battery* (2012)

Chapter III. Contagious Becoming

“Speaking their names, they shake
the flag.
Waking the earth, it lifts and lags
We see a thousand rooms to rest
Helping us taste the bite of death.”
-Sufjan Stevens (2006)

Contagion is, of course, a defining feature of the contemporary viral zombie. The zombie’s drive to bite and consume is not only a means to sustain itself, but also a means of transmission for the virus that animates it. In the first *Resident Evil* (2002) film, the characters and the audience are informed by the Hive’s artificially intelligent security system that “a bite, even a single scratch from one of these creatures is enough...and then you become one” (Anderson, 2002). This plays out in the film’s numerous sequels: within a matter of months the world is almost completely overrun, as a few hundred zombies quickly becomes thousands and then millions. This communicability, coupled with the indiscriminate way in which the zombie pursues potential food sources/vectors of contagion, is of course significant in terms of the deterritorializing capacity of the zombie. However, while contagion intensifies or exacerbates the process of deterritorialization, it also allows for the proliferation potentials.

In Chapter 10 of *A thousand plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1980) “oppose epidemic to filiation, contagion to heredity, peopling by contagion to sexual reproduction...” (p. 241). In filial and hereditary reproduction, there is always a looking back to an inheritance that may be biological or, as in the Oedipal family, psychological. Either way, this inheritance predetermines the relations and structures in which the body, the organism, or the subject is formulated. It limits reproduction to a linear narrative. Conversely, contagion is a means of propagation that favors mutation, resulting from and opening onto an infinite array of vectors and potentialities. In the deterritorialization of the filial and the generation of potential is queer becoming. And so, the

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

zombie's 'bite of death' encompasses queer negativity/failure *and* the queer possibilities that overflow subjectivity. But this should come as no surprise as Deleuze theorized Thanatos, the death drive, not as the opposite of Eros, "but Eros carried to its *n*th power" (Colebrook 2014, p. 87).

We see the failure of filial, hereditary reproduction in the popular trope of the zombie child. Against the zombie child, even the most basic 'human' drive of self-preservation cannot stand. In the popular series *Game of Thrones*, confronted with the reanimated children of the massive army of walking dead, a warrior chooses to allow herself to be slaughtered and reanimated, rather than break filial law. The horror of the child zombie speaks to what Edelman would refer to as our fixation on futurity, which elevates the Child to an ideal, another transcendent term. Futurity here can be understood in terms of legacies and lineages, an attachment to a future that we create now by the passing down of genetic, biological, social, and even economic legacies. The Child, necessarily, props up an essentially conservative and reactionary political and social position, focused on the continuation of the status quo for the sake of the children. The Child becomes the mantra and metronome for how we justify decisions as a society or culture. According to Edelman, this structure gives no space for the rejection of reproductive futurity hence the need for those who identify as 'pro-choice' to distance itself from accusations that they are 'anti-life.' We are simply not allowed to say "no" to life. The zombie child, however, does not offer the promise of futurity, but instead violates the order of proliferation by becoming vectors of contagion.

The film *Cooties* (Milot & Murnion, 2014) focuses exclusively on the child zombie or, to be more precise, the zombie that arises from the infection of a child. The infection begins when an infected chicken is used in a batch of processed, mass-produced chicken nuggets ultimately

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

served in an elementary school cafeteria. The teachers soon find themselves under siege, but discover that the virus only kills and alters hosts that have not yet gone through puberty. The radicality of this film, which is more comedy than horror, is in its unabashed embrace of hostility toward, and rejection of, the ideal of the Child as precious futurity, or even just precious. Clint Hadson, who has the misfortune to begin his first day as a substitute teacher on the morning of the outbreak, is initially excited by the prospect of molding young minds. However, not long after he takes his post, he, and thus the viewer, becomes disabused of this romantic notion of children and childhood. He finds himself in an antagonistic exchange with an eight-year-old student named Patriot who, in many ways, exemplifies the worst of Oedipal, neurotic reproduction. He mocks Clint's name, asking if his name is 'cunt.' He then doubles down on this by launching into what is clearly a regurgitation of his parents' views (if the name was not yet a clue), complete with such inflammatory phrases as 9-11 and "towel-heads." The odiousness of this student creates an experience of satisfaction for the character and the audience when he is bitten by a female student as he bullies her. As Clint responds, when asked by a fellow teacher if he sent her to the principal's office: "Are you kidding me. I wanted to give her a high-five. That kid is a dick." Of course, while we bask in the enjoyment of Patriot's suffering, the little girl has since escaped onto the playground and will soon begin infecting other children.

The film manages to queer the various clichés of childhood innocence by correlating them with the vector of contagion. A child running in slow motion appears to be playing tag until we see him attack another child. The teachers locked safe inside the school look on in horror as a child play jump rope with the entrails slain adults (Fig. 15, below). In a way, we can understand these scenes as an example of what Freud in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) referred to as the "polymorphous perversity" of infantile sexuality in which sexual desire flows

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

through and toward any number of objects and acts. But instead of seeing this perversity as a return to an earlier stage of development, we can understand it as a flow of desire that has been unblocked by the deterritorialization of reproduction that is contagion. This not only intensifies



Figure 15: Cooties (2014)

this sense of clearing not only the idea of the Child, but the severing of the fixed relation of reproductive futurity between the adults and children. As the teachers come to realize that the children are no longer their future, but in fact, will ultimately be the instruments of their demise, they band together with a post-pubescent student and develop an escape plan. When initial plans to sneak out undetected fail, the survivors fight through the horde of zombie children to escape the school, killing them with various school supplies, gym equipment, and a reckless abandon that rivals the violence of the zombie horde.

While we can understand the ways in which the zombie child's deterritorialization of childhood and futurity can free the adults from their own confinement in filial reproduction, it is also possible to see the ways in which the zombie child resists the reproduction of the adult within them. As mentioned earlier, Clint saw teaching as an opportunity to reproduce through

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

identification, through the filiation of school and the teacher-student relation. However, once the children were infected, they no longer possessed the capacity to be Oedipalized or domesticated by the structures of school, family, or adult/child power dynamic. The turning point in the film, when the teachers finally conclude that even outside law cannot prevail, occurs when a parent arrives to pick up her child after school. The adults waited eagerly on the roof to contact an unfettered authority. However, the zombie child enters the car without the inattentive parent noticing that he is covered in blood and makes quick work of his mother and infant sibling who, as the scene closes, offers up a feral cry of hunger, not for a bottle, but for flesh. The children transform, becoming little vectors for contagion, resisting any containment outside of complete destruction which, also, ultimately fails, as uninfected adults become quickly outnumbered throughout the school, the country, and ultimately the world.

But this trope of the zombie child is not constrained to comedies. The 2004 remake of *Dawn of the Dead* (Snyder), while its primary focus is not the zombie child, features the zombie child in a way that pushes the deterritorialization of reproductive futurity even further. The film first introduces the main protagonist, Ana to the zombie outbreak by way of a neighborhood girl who is well known to her and her husband. We witness the affection within the protagonist as she returns from her shift at the hospital and indulges the little girl by watching her rollerblade backwards. Early the next morning, her husband awakens to the girl standing in the doorway in her night clothes, her lips ripped away, revealing teeth, gums, and part of her jaw bone. He rushes up to her, and in so doing, brings his bare throat close to her mouth (Fig. 16, below). The



Figure 16: *Dawn of the Dead* (2004)

infected child immediately bites him, ripping open a major artery in the process. Ana attempts to stop the bleeding to no avail. As she escapes from the house, running from both the infected girl and her reanimated, infected husband, the camera pans out revealing to the audience what Ana has already realized: the zombie virus has already spread to pandemic proportions. As in *Cooties*, the zombification of a child severs the filial relation and transforms the child from a reproduction of the oedipalized adult, and a possible future of further reproduction via heredity, into a vector for a different type of proliferation.

However, what pushes this notion even further occurs later in the film, after Ana joins another group of survivors in the ‘safety’ of a locked mall. Among the survivors is a young, extremely pregnant woman and her boyfriend. Before the survivors can systematically destroy the few zombies still lurking on their side of the bullet-proof glass doors, the pregnant woman is attacked and scratched by a zombie. At this point, it is unknown to the characters that this would be sufficient to infect her and no one thinks much of it. But after several days, the woman has not

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

been seen by any of the survivors except her boyfriend, who tells everyone that she is fine and resting in the makeshift apartment that he set up in the back of a baby boutique. But the camera soon reveals the actual state of the woman and her fetus. Her veins are black with the spread of infection, and her skin is a sickly greyish color. She bites at him, a threat to his own survival and well-being every second that she remains ‘alive.’ And yet, as we see her boyfriend lean over, speaking to her abdomen, we realize that it is not an affection for her that makes him risk his life and the life of all inside the mall, but rather his fixation on filiation, the future of his line. And it is for this future that the boyfriend is willing not only to die himself, but to kill.

Of course, reproductive futurity failed from the moment that his girlfriend became infected. The infection could not be contained, resulting in a fetus that was no longer the product of filiation and sexual reproduction but rather a coupling of human and viral, resulting in something...else. The fetus was neither human nor nonhuman, living nor dead, but something beyond, a mutation that violates and explodes these borders. This becomes clear when the infant



Figure 17: Dawn of the Dead (2004)

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

is ‘born’ or, perhaps, more appropriately, expelled from the body of the zombie that carried it. The camera cuts to an extreme close-up as the survivors, having discovered the situation, pull apart the folds of a small bundle to reveal the results of a zombie’s labor: an infantile zombie whose rotting, bloated skin and sunken eyes defy any hope of reproductive futurity (See Fig 17, above). In his essay, *Reanimating the Social Order: Zombies and Queer Failure*, Trevor Grizzell (2014) describes this scene as a failure that opens onto a queering of reproduction wherein normative structures of proliferation and desire are dismantled and able to form new organizations and organisms. Indeed, this scene does harken back to Halberstam’s discussion of a photograph by Judie Bamber. This photograph, entitled *I’ll Give You Something to Cry About (Dead Baby Finch)*, documents the twisted body of a bird that died just prior to or just after hatching. For Halberstam, both the subject and the title of this piece challenges the viewers’ investment in reproduction, infancy and the purity of reproductive progress by portraying its failure in stark detail without sentiment and perhaps even with a tone of disdain (2011, p. 106). As the zombified infant screams and grasps for sustenance from the living human flesh gathered around it, it announces the failure of reproduction that not only clears away fixed relations of sexual reproduction and sex but exposes to the body/subjectivity the “new organization” of contagion.

Of course, the opposition between filial reproduction and contagion in the viral zombie film is not limited to the disruption of filial lineage produced by the zombie child. In the 2013 film, *Contracted* (England), we witness, and more importantly experience, the contagion of adults in exquisite and excruciating detail. The contagion of adults is not only a disruption of filial lineage but the elimination of the desire for it---replaced by different appetites. The film centers around Sam, a woman who contracts a yet undiscovered sexually transmitted disease

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

when she is assaulted by a serial rapist and necrophiliac at a friend's party. The film follows the progression of her zombification over the course of three days and ends where most zombie films begin, at the start of the outbreak. And so, at the end of the film, the characters and the audience are left without even the most unsatisfying or ineffectual of epidemiological explanations, much less a plan for containment or cure. Unlike other films within this genre, Sam's process is a slow decay in which even a temporary border between living and death, human and zombie does not seem to exist. We do not see Sam draw her last breath and lie still before opening her eyes to reveal the change, a scene that has become an iconic moment in nearly all zombie films. Her slower progression, occurring over several days, allows the film to highlight Sam's deterritorialization of subject and transition into becoming through contagion.

The movement from the filial to epidemic is apparent from the very first scene of the film. The film opens with a close-up shot of a corpse's feet, complete with toe-tag, shaking rhythmically. As the scene unfolds, we realize that this movement is caused by a man penetrating the corpse. It ends with the man's hand, cleaning out a specimen tube by penetrating it with his



Figure 18: Contracted (2013)



Figure 19: *Contracted* (2013)

finger. This scene is directly followed by a montage of orchids. A slender hand gently sprays a fine mist on the leaves and petals ornately pigmented orchids (See Figs. 18 & 19, above). These shots, paired as they are at the beginning of the film, visually contrast the perverse hand that has no investment in the Oedipal with the nurturing hand that props up heredity and domesticity. The orchids might thus be thought of as heredity *par excellence*. They are the result of generations of careful breeding, all in the hopes of progression toward a desirable goal. This investment in shots, paired as they are at the beginning of the film, visually contrast the perverse hand that has no investment in the Oedipal with the nurturing hand that props up heredity and domesticity. The orchids might thus be thought of as heredity *par excellence*. They are the result of generations of careful breeding, all in the hopes of progression toward a desirable goal. This investment in selecting out the wild, unpredictable anomalies produced something that can only exist within a controlled and rarified setting of a meticulously kept domicile or hot house, tended by a traditionally maternal hand. As they explore the possible becomings opened by contagion, Deleuze and Guattari (1980) reference animal-becomings that arise from the contagion of the packs, bands, and for our purposes, hordes. They caution against misguided glorification of

imitations, what I call pseudo-becomings that are the relations between humans and their domestic pets: “a little cat or dog owned by an elderly woman,” who impose the Oedipal onto them rather than exposing new relations, organizations or becomings (p. 244). Thus, Sam’s interaction with the orchid is not becoming-orchid, the result from a contagious transmission that passes between her and the orchid, but rather her domestication of the orchid in which we might say she makes the orchid her child.

However, as the virus spreads throughout her body, causing her to slowly decompose, Sam’s investment in the order of filial reproduction also deteriorates, and her body and mind reorganize and reorient toward contagion. After her exposure to the virus, Sam’s body begins to change, in subtle ways at first, and then ultimately undergoes an intense and catastrophic deterioration. The first day after she contracted the zombie virus, Sam experiences a cooling of her body. She cannot get warm, as if to mark a shift from healthy, living tissue to tissue that has died and thus has no blood flow through which to regulate core temperature. By the second day she begins to experience more alarming changes in her body. She wakes up with intense cramping in her abdomen, covered in blood, the result of vaginal bleeding which she mistakenly identifies as her period. She has a harder time explaining away the strange rash radiating from her genitals and extending to her abdomen, a sort of blackish, purple veining that is not painful but looks as though her flesh is necrotizing from the inside, her blood congealing in her veins. By the end of the second day, the deterritorialization of Sam’s body accelerates exponentially. While out with a friend, she starts to bleed into one of her eyes, to the point that her iris and pupil are almost completely occluded. Later that night, as she attempts to treat her eye and otherwise perform evening ablutions, she starts to notice an intense and unpleasant smell emanating from

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

inside her and during the cleaning we see a maggot fall from between her legs and wiggle on the bathroom tiles, a portent of what is to come.

Interestingly, even as her body and mind deteriorate Sam experiences an intensification of her sense of smell. At one point, her mother burns herself on the kitchen stove and Sam detects the smell of burning flesh. Sam wanders into the kitchen and asks if her mother is cooking breakfast. But, in fact, she was attracted by the smell of her mother, cooking. Sam also experiences an intensified sensitivity to sound, and a heightened arousal which translates to increased aggression and sexual desire. It is as though her body is adapting to this new mode of proliferation, making her better able to find other vectors or hosts for the infection that is incubating inside her. Even her decomposition is a potential vector through which she can spread the zombie contagion. On the third day of her infection, Sam is called in to work a shift at a restaurant where she is employed. After making a salad for two of the patrons with her bare hands, a scene that inspires an intense feeling of discomfort and disgust for the film viewer, Sam looks down at her hands to discover that her fingernails have turned a dark brown, and several of them are missing. A scream from the dining room soon announces where at least one of the missing fingernails have likely gotten off to and identifies a potential new host for the zombie virus that Sam has contracted and now passed on.

By the third morning, Sam has started to lose teeth and hair. The eye that she bled into the night before has died in the socket, turning sickly white while the other eye is already reddened with blood. Running parallel to Sam's decay is the decay of her would-be award-winning orchids, the children she has not cared for since she contracted the virus. By the time she presents herself and them to the flower show registration table, both she and the orchids are significantly decayed. The delicate petals of this rare, domestic orchid are wilted on the stems,

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

hanging limply, many completely desiccated. And, once she removes her even hidden beneath large sunglasses, it is easy to see that Sam is not faring much better (See Fig. 20, below).

Ultimately, this decay ensure that she is denied entry and, enraged, she screams and throws her once precious plants into the garbage as she walks out.



Figure 20: Contracted (2013)

Sam's relation to her delicate, show-worthy orchids is not the only filial, reproductive relationship that begins to decay as she becomes epidemic. Sam is bound by many different filial relations that compete for her attention and investment and has, by the end of the film, destroyed or transformed all of them through contagion.

Her relationship with her mother is one example that attempts to bind Sam to the filial reproductive order. Early on, Sam moves back in with her mother after completing rehab, an environment rife with tension and unexpressed hostility. Her mother simultaneously smothers her with concern, and constantly denigrates any attempts to extricate herself from the family plot. Her mother also makes it clear that she disapproves of Sam's same-sex relationship with her girlfriend, Nikki, and often pressures Sam to conform to heteronormative, filial reproduction. Directly, Sam's mother discourages her from seeing Nikki, criticizing her relationship and the

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

‘influence’ that it has. Her mother also attempts to subtly reinforce conformity. Her insistence on ‘family dinners,’ encouragement of Sam’s participation in the flower show, and her attempts to ‘lay down the law’ when she suspects that Sam’s haggard state is the result of drug use are all ways in which her mother attempts to confine her within the order of filiation and heredity.

But filial law cannot stand against contagion. Although Sam’s mother attempts to ‘save’ her daughter, setting up intervention, Sam negates this with the simple unveiling of her change. She pulls off the sunglasses and stocking cap that she had been wearing non-stop and screams (See Fig. 21, below), revealing a balding scalp, dead eye and mouth full of rotting and missing



Figure 21: Contracted (2013)

teeth, boldly displaying her choice of the necrotic over the neurotic. The next time she sees her mother, in the final scene of the film, Sam has completed her movement from the filial to the contagious. Sam shambles aggressively toward her mother who begs her to come to her and opens her arms as she approaches. As the scene goes black, we hear her scream from within

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

Sam's arms, and in the inverse of the birth scene from *Dawn of the Dead* (2004) filial reproduction is infected and queered.

Filial reproduction is not the only relation queered in this film. Throughout, Sam's relationships with her peers are shown to be structured in such a way as to place her always in the passive position. Sam's girlfriend Nikki, friend Anna and somewhat friend/somewhat stalker Riley all wish to have Sam for themselves, using subtle manipulations and more obvious mechanisms to direct and control her behavior. However, once infected and contagious, Sam can no longer be controlled, cannot, in fact, even be confined within a framework of sexuality that includes the binary of homosexuality and heterosexuality. In their explanation of the opposition of contagious proliferation to reproduction, Deleuze and Guattari claim that, "For us...there are as many sexes as there are terms in symbiosis, as many differences as elements to a process of contagion" (p. 243). And so, in the queer move from reproduction to contagion, there is not forced choice between two sexes and thus, a limited subset of sexualities and desires but rather an infinite array of sexes or "*n* sexes" (p. 243). In their final interaction, Nikki, who has throughout the movie attempted to force Sam to choose between the label of bi-curious (a little girl simply experimenting) or 'purely homosexual' (aroused exclusively by the female body), breaks up with Sam, stating mockingly "You've run your course" (England, dir. 2013). Unfortunately for Nikki, Sam had not, in fact, run her course, having merely just begun. Sam kills Nikki, rejecting and dissolving any boundaries their relation had entailed, and moving on the next stage of contagion.

Ironically, it is Anna and Riley, those 'friends' who had wanted Sam's attentions so badly, who become the victims/vectors of Sam's contagion. After disposing of Nikki, Sam turns to Anna, the closest new host for Sam's zombie subjectivity. But all is not as Anna had

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

envisioned. As she kisses Anna, Sam begins to vomit blood into her mouth, engaging in a very different kind of coupling than Anna had been hoping for: a contagious coupling. Anna attempts to block this contagious transmission as she tries to run away, inciting Sam's murderous rage. Robbed once again of a host, Sam calls Riley, who is more than eager to step in. With the interaction between Riley and Sam, the film creates some of its most visceral and disturbing illustrations of the failure of fecundity that opens onto contagion. When Riley arrives, Sam quickly begins seducing him, although her shocking physical state is still somewhat detectable in the purposefully dimmed lights. As he begins to penetrate her, Riley remarks that she is wet and is excited by his perception of her arousal. But after a few moments, he notices a tingling feeling and pulls out in surprise. To his horror, what follows is a birth of blood and maggots from her vaginal canal (See Fig. 22, below). This birth, or anti-birth if you will, is not the culmination of



Figure 22: Contracted (2013)

filial reproduction, the vehicle for futurity that is absolute and inviolate, but rather instead the vector for contagion, the initiation of zombie subjectivity and becoming. And though Riley, in a

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

state of shock and disgust, runs to the bathroom to purify himself, we have already seen the failure of sexual reproduction.

Alice, like Sam and even Clint, undergoes a shift from the filial to the contagious, as the relations in which she finds herself at the beginning of the first film are deterritorialized through death, destruction and other failures. Perhaps the most central failure of filiation, is the failure of her relation with the Umbrella Corporation. Prior to the incidents of the first film, Alice was a security expert for the corporation, or at least believed herself to be¹¹. Like the structure of a family, the Umbrella Corporation is an example of filial reproduction that is not necessarily biological but is an entity that attempts to reproduce itself through a process of identification. However, as the events of the films unfold, Alice's relation to Umbrella Corporation and the other relations that follow from it are severed. This severance, like Sam's severance from her mother or Clint's from the Child, shifts her interactions with the corporation from the filial to the contagious.

At the beginning of the first film, Alice awakens without any memories of her involvement with Umbrella Corporation. This failure, as discussed in previous chapters, is already a deterritorialization of the structures of the subject that had before organized her body/subjectivity. It also allows for her to move through much of the events of the first film without her reactions and interactions being predetermined by prior information or relations. She does not enter the Hive with Umbrella Corporation's or even her own agenda, nor does she view the events that transpire through the eyes of a loyal or at least, well-socialized employee of the corporation as we saw in the opening scenes of the film as the other workers were killed and/or infected. When Alice does regain access to certain memories of her recent history with the

¹¹ In the final installment of the film franchise, *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter* (2016), we discover Alice's origins and other revelations about her involvement with Umbrella Corporation that will be explored further in the later chapters.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

Umbrella Corporation, this does not constitute a return to the filial order but rather it pushes Alice into active resistance and rejection. The memories that Alice regains are those of Umbrella Corp's dealings in military bioweapons and her own attempts to leak this information to stop them. She also remembers the sham marriage that she entered with one of the survivors in the Hive, who falsely claimed to have no memories like Alice. Like Umbrella Corporation, he attempted to sell bioweapons for his own profit and tried to convince Alice to abscond with him, yet another filial and fixed relation. Alice rejects his overtures in a brutal fashion, allowing him to be infected by one of the T-virus mutations. These memories and revelations, coupled with the death and infection of the other survivors and her own capture at the end of the film, prompted the rejection and active pursuit of revenge against Umbrella Corporation. It is this rejection of the filial relation with Umbrella Corporation that leads to a contagious-coupling.

To recreate what the corporation has dubbed 'Project Alice', and her bond with the T-virus (in a host that they hope will be indoctrinated rather than rebellious), Umbrella Corporation clones her. This is yet another coupling that is not of the order of filial or sexual reproduction but rather an assemblage of biology and machine to allow for a propagation of Alice that is epidemic. When we are first introduced to the notion of Alice clones at the beginning of *Resident Evil: Extinction* (2007), we witness each new clone move through a recreation of the first lab she emerged from at the end of the first film. In the first shots moments we-the-viewer are unable to distinguish between that 'first' Alice and the clone in terms of appearance and reactions. However, very soon the clone begins to deviate from the original scene, reacting differently than the Alice we saw in the two prior films. The clone, ultimately, fails to escape the series of traps and zombie ambushes that await in the Hive lab. When she dies, we witness two men in hazmat suits carry her to the surface and deposit her corpse. As the close-up shot pans out we can see

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

hundreds of other Alice corpses who all, clearly succumbed to different aspects of the Hive sequence. This scene tells us that, despite Umbrella's attempts to reproduce the same, by providing the same DNA and the same conditions, the outcomes could not be controlled to predicted. In the final scene of this third installment, which parallels the structure of the earlier scene, Alice stands in another underground laboratory and, standing next to her, what appears to be a second Alice. The camera stays with a shot of the two, looking outward, over what appears to be a vast expanse. The camera then turns from them to what, we imagine, they are looking out onto. We-as-them see rows and columns of gelatinous pods that appear to be numbered in the hundreds if not thousands, all containing Alice clones (See Fig. 23, below). As the camera pans out the screen seems to teem with Alice's, like microorganisms multiplying in a petri dish. Like Sam in *Contracted*, Alice's exposure to the T-virus has removed her from the order of filial or



Figure 23: Resident Evil: Extinction (2007)

hereditary reproduction. They are no longer fecund in the ways in which we have come to associate with human reproduction and the feminine.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

This mode of propagation does not reproduce the same but allows for mutations and infinite assemblages. Alice ends up a much more formidable foe than anyone associated with Umbrella Corporation or the T-virus project expected. In the second film, *Resident Evil: Apocalypse*, Alice's coupling with the T-virus increases her strength, speed, reflexes, and durability making her more than human and more than a host for the T-Virus, a hybrid of nonhuman microorganism and human. In the third film, *Resident Evil: Extinction*, the Alice-virus becoming continues to mutate and develops telekinetic powers, allowing her to manipulate objects, elements, and molecules. One of the most visually intense scenes of the third film depicts her defense of a band of nomadic survivors who were under attack by a flock of infected crows that had been feeding on decomposing zombie flesh. Alice-virus ignites the air, incinerating the flock with nothing but her own capacity to manipulate air molecules. What these developments and mutations express is the way in which contagious proliferations allow for and involve couplings and assemblages that "have nothing to do with sexual reproduction" because they involve something greater than the binary differences between sexes, but allow for couplings with the animal, the microscopic and even the molecular and imperceptible.

These are contagious lines of becoming between the human and the nonhuman, the macro and microscopic, single and multi-celled organisms, living and dead, even the organic and inorganic. As shown throughout this chapter the vector for contagion can be a bite, a scratch, or sexual transmission, a virus, a contaminated chicken nugget. These vectors make possible infinite becomings: becoming-viral, becoming-horde, becoming-death, becoming-molecular, and even becoming-inorganic that we can think of as infinite subjectivities with n vectors for the proliferation of subjectivity. Thus, if we are to truly accept Alice as our patient we must no longer operate under the assumption that her relations and couplings can be reduced to the

reproductive and familial, nothing more than a recapitulation of the father and the mother. We certainly must not take these contagious becomings as secondary to or less than what we think of as the reproductive. We must accept that the relation of contagion, the capability to infect and be infected, is necessary for proliferation and relation. In this way, we may, as practitioners and theorists begin to explore for all those relations and creations that are not fully accounted for by filiation and reproduction.

Chapter IV. Viral Subjectivity

“I know, I know my time is passed.
I’m not so young, I’m not so fast.
I tremble with the nervous thought.
Of having been, at last, forgot.”
-Sufjan Stevens

In the previous chapters, we discussed the deterritorializing ‘power’ of the viral zombie, a clearing not only of space but of the subject; a clearing that makes space for a contagious subjectivity that is, ultimately, viral. However, it is important to clarify that contagious subjectivity does not, by itself, constitute or determine subjectivity as viral. To realize the becoming-viral of subjectivity via contagion, we must return to Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of haecceity and assemblage. For what is a virus other than an expert assemblage-er? The virus cannot ‘live’ outside of an assemblage. It is, after all, an obligate parasite that can only proliferate in its coupling with the DNA of its host. Thus, the virus is always an assemblage of host DNA and its own rogue strand and even, perhaps, portions of DNA from prior hosts of the strain. For Deleuze and Guattari (1980), assemblage is a coming together or coupling of disparate and heterogenous bodies, actions, ideas that allow for the emergence of new ideas, states, intensities, and even realities. Hence, the obligatory parasitism of the viral assemblage is

not a limitation, but rather that which allows it to couple with its host molecularly and to adapt, mutate, and flourish as successfully as it does.

The viral zombie is no different and is perhaps, even more so than any of the other vectors I have discussed, a master of assemblage. It pulls in, as its constitutive parts, not only virus and human, micro and macroscopic, but also life and death and even the organic and inorganic¹². And, as I discussed in Chapter 2, the zombie lacks at its ‘core’ a stable and consistent identity, narrative, or perspective. The zombie is not motivated by an adherence to a set of behaviors or beliefs, but is instead constantly being produced through its interaction with that which is external to itself. It is always shifting, acting, moving, and infecting. It can also clear a path for the relations and productions---away from the containment of the subject---toward different forms and models for a subjectivity of becoming that is constantly being formed in its relations, but that never actually “arrives.” Thus, the viral zombie allows for a subjectivity that assembles and is assemblage, a viral subjectivity.

Now we return, once again, to *Resident Evil* (2002) and its primary protagonist, our favorite assemblage, Alice. As I’ve noted, throughout the series of films, Alice has a gap in her memory that leaves her incapable of forming a linear, complete narrative or to produce a clear sense of meaning. She, like Otto in *Otto; Or Up with Dead People* (2008), has no memory of her life prior to working for Umbrella Corp and only experiences small flashes of memory for the days leading up to the events of the first film. Alice’s ‘personality’ is an assemblage of the events that occur, the situations in which she is placed, the objects around her, and her procedural memories. All of which come together to form an assemblage that allows her to do incredible things. As viewers, then, we continually witness a heterogeneous subjectivity

¹² The incorporation of the inorganic into the viral assemblage of the zombie will be discussed further later in this chapter, particularly in the discussion of the films *Pontypool* (2008) and *Antisocial* (2012). In both films the vectors of the zombie virus are inorganic: soundwaves and Wi-Fi respectively.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

composed of her body, the environment, decontextualized memories, and even the techne with which she engages. At the end of the first film, we are introduced to the idea that even her DNA is an assemblage of the reanimating and mutational virus and human DNA that does not regress or progress toward one or the other of its origins but remains a becoming-viral without telos.

This idea is explored throughout the entire franchise, as mutable as Alice in which it resides.

Alice's character is not a given and stable subject, but rather as an assemblage subjectivity that is constantly making new couplings, incorporating new bodies, forms and intensities.

Alice's becoming assemblage is apparent in a scene from first film, when she is separated from the armed security team and finds herself lost in one of the Hive's many laboratories. Naturally, this was where the canine test subjects were housed prior to the release of the T-virus into the Hive's air-ducts. She suddenly finds herself surrounded by reanimated and mutated dogs, growling and poised to attack. As the infected dogs leap to strike, Alice's 'body' takes over and throws her into action, decentralizing her subjective identity as the site from which action and "choice" occurs. She looks down at her body, surprised by what it can do. She raises the gun that she picked up from the non-reanimated corpse of a security guard and begins to fire. The scene that follows is a series of cuts between close-up shots of Alice, the gun, and the infected dogs. The film cuts between them all so quickly that viewer loses any distinction among and they all become interchangeable with and inseparable from one another. This use of interlocking shots prevents the viewer, even if only temporarily, from positioning Alice as the superordinate entity in this scene. Rather than interpret this moment as evidence of some sort of dissociative disorder, a failure of integration between body and mind as we psychologists have certainly been trained to do, we might take it up in another way. Without the assumption or goal of a human subject that should be central to all behaviors, reactions, affects we could instead see Alice, not as

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

dissociated from her body but more connected to her relation to that which is around her to the dogs, to the virus, to the gun, to her movement through space. And thus, we could recognize and even take part in the relational assemblage of animal, virus, techne and ‘human’ that created new affects that Alice had, to this point, not known she was capable of.

The scene ends with a close-up of an empty bullet casing as it hits the ground, the Umbrella logo distinctly engraved on the end. This is a foreshadowing of what we discover of Alice in the final film *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter* (2016), which is that Alice was created by Umbrella Corporation, not metaphorically, but in actuality. She was created with a combination of the DNA of the daughter of one of the founders of the corporation (with the removal and splicing of certain genes) and the addition of the progenitor of the T-virus and all those strains that followed. But, as in the viral itself, her assemblage subjectivity is not a limitation, but a capacity to form and create ever more couplings and capacities. This scene described above is only the first of many in which the ever-shifting assemblage of her subjectivity allows Alice to perform extraordinary, even impossible, feats by instinct and response rather than from what we might think of as a rational self, a subject that plans accordingly.

But, Alice is not the only assemblage that the *Resident Evil* (2002-2016) franchise offers us. The zombie of these films is, of course, already a living-dead, human-virus (and even dog-virus) assemblage. And there are still other mutations that proliferate throughout the landscapes of the six live-action films. One of the first of these assemblages that we see, prior to revelations about Alice, is a mutation resulting from the injection of the T-virus into living tissue, as opposed to the inhaled or ingested T-virus which first kills, and then reanimates, its host. One of the resulting mutations, casually referred to by characters and fans of the franchise as a “licker,”

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

is a visual assemblage of human and animal forms (See Fig. 24, above). Besides its long, lashing serpentine tongue (from whence its nickname arises), one of its most prominent feature is its exposed brain. The image of the brain, a centrality of which we associate most immediately and



Figure 24: Resident Evil (2002)

readily as being quintessentially human, appears on this nonhuman entity. Its other human-like physiological features include the size and shape of its head, and curve of the neck down to the shoulders and spine. And yet its face lacks eyes, like certain cave-dwelling fish. Its mouth can come unhinged like a snake or angler fish and is filled with sharp teeth like a canine. When the audience first meets the “licker”, its bone structure and musculature would indicate it is, or should be, bipedal and yet the audience watches as it crawls down the wall on all fours, ready to pounce on the unsuspecting character below. We watch as it splays its fingers and opposable thumbs, topped with a set of claws reminiscent of the big cats. The “licker” human-virus assemblage continually mutates as it “acquires” fresh DNA through consumption of living flesh. It also opens onto another mutation when it infects a human with its scratch, producing a lick-

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

human-virus inter-assemblage. The mutation, proliferation and mobilization of these viral assemblages, from the “licker,” to its predecessors, and ultimately to the Alice project, were never completely under the control of Umbrella Corporation. The Umbrella Corporation, despite its attempts to predict and control the outcomes of these heterogeneous couplings and formations were never able to gain mastery over the infected or the forms they took. This is because viral assemblages are always in a movement of queer becoming.

And the viral assemblages of these mutations, the ‘licker’ and even Alice herself, are only enhanced by the addition of the digital. The form or medium of these entities in the film is also a coupling of disparate bodies, the bodies of live actors, film and computer-generated images (CGI). The ‘licker’ is an entirely digital image that still shares the screen with actors who, presumably, are not. Of course, as the films progress, the actress that plays Alice becomes more and more digital. In the ever-more elaborate fight scenes, we see her rendered in 3-D and moving through an almost entirely digitized fight-scape with entirely computer-generated foes. In *The Virtual Life of Film* (2007), Rodowick argues that the digital is merely one more coupling, one more potential component to be included in what he claims is already the “hybridity of film” (Rodowick 2007, p. 14). This is not to say, however, that he dismisses the radicality of the digital movement, any more than he would dismiss the notion that the advent of film and cinema as a genre had an impact on what we understand as thought and subjectivity. Rodowick focuses on the manipulability of the digital image. Like the T-virus that couples with the human to produce the zombie, an assemblage of dead-alive, human-virus that can seemingly open onto infinite possible manifestations, the digital image is infinitely mutable. It should be no surprise, then, that the viral zombie has enjoyed such a flourishing in this digital age of cinema, a proliferation and mutation which no longer remains merely biological or organic but non-organic and even digital.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

In 2008, the Canadian-produced and set film *Pontypool* (McDonald) proposed a zombie virus that was spread, not through biological vectors, but through language. In this film, certain words, types of words, and structures of speech, are ‘infected.’ When they are heard, spoken, or thought, the listener, speaker, thinker becomes host to these infected words. The result is a sort of nonorganic zombie-ism, in which the host begins to repeat words, phrases and even sounds in search of more infected words and more hosts to hear or speak them. Failing in this contagion, the infected begin to violently destroy the non-infected. The audience witnesses this progression unfold when one of the few characters we see on screen, Laurel-Ann, begins to manifest the symptoms. At the beginning, she finds herself getting caught in verbal loops, having to resist the urge to repeat in its various conjugates the word ‘missing.’ At times, she can only stifle the manifested symptom by putting her hand over her mouth, halting the flow of speech, if not thought. However, once she finds herself in an impromptu and somewhat philosophical conversation with another person, she is unable to resist and her speech as conversation begins to fall apart. She tells her interlocutor, Sydney Briar, who is the producer of the radio-show they are still amid broadcasting: “I am going to go see if Mr. Mazzy’s missing...missing, missing, missing, missing...I mean, I mean Mr. Mazzy, Mr. Mazzy’s missing as in he’s not here...I’m gonna, I’m gonna go.” This is important because Mazzy is decidedly not missing, but is, in fact, simply in a soundproof booth in the studio. As she gets up from the couch, we hear a tea kettle begin to whistle on the stove. Sydney removes the kettle and yet can still hear the same whistling just off-screen. Sydney follows the sound and realizes, to her horror and confusion, that it is coming from Laurel-Ann, who does not respond to any of Sydney’s pleas or questions.

The other infected, revealed to us off-screen are likewise assemblages of language and sound, sometimes yelling about U-boats, sometimes making sounds like windshield wipers. Just

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

before he is infected with the words ‘simple, sample, and symbol,’ becoming, what one character calls, “a crude signal, seeking” (McDonald, 2008), Ken Loney puts an infected on the phone. Loney describes the infected as a large, teenage boy who has no hands and no feet but, as Ken holds up the phone to his mouth, we hear what sounds like the screaming and crying of a very young infant. This phenomenon, which Ken describes as hearing “a little baby crying from inside” him, underscores the realization that these sounds are not just imitations and mimicry, but the result of new couplings. They are, in fact, the output of a subjectivity assemblage that has coupled with words and sounds and, even in repetition, have made them new and contagious.

Sydney is eventually led away by Dr. Mendez, who found his way into the news station to escape the horde (or, as Ken called them, herds) of linguistic-zombies outside. Sydney and the doctor walk away silently and lock themselves inside with Mazzy, who is still broadcasting, attempting to impart some type of narrative for what audience he might have left. After a few moments without the sound of the kettle to couple with, Laurel-Ann tries to follow them but soon loses interest in a glass door from which no sound escapes. She begins walking around the station, engaging in what the doctor describes to Sydney and Mazzy as ‘rooting’, i.e. attempting to find another word or sound, as well as another host or ‘victim’. And as she goes longer and longer without any sounds, words, or victims to incorporate, the subjective assemblage that is Laurel-Ann begins to disintegrate, clawing and beating its head against the glass, and ceases to be in the absence of bodies and intensities with which to couple.

And so, we see this linguistic-virus-subjective assemblage is an example of becoming. Like the lick, they continually seek new words and sounds to incorporate into themselves, to change and mutate new host words, a relation to language that has nothing to do with the human subject, but merely as a vector for contagion. Over and over, the characters are forced to hear

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

their own words echoing back from the hordes. This becomes one of the most terrifying aspects for the characters: ‘their’ words, and even ‘their’ tones, becoming a part of the horde operating independently of themselves. Then again, has the zombie apocalypse already occurred? We have all experienced our own words, or witnessed the words of others, change into something else, become something of the horde, particularly when these disseminations go viral in the context of social media and internet memes. This conjecture into social media brings us neatly to our next film.

In the film, *Antisocial* (Calahan, 2013), the viral zombie is passed through social media, a fictionalized Facebook analogue called the Social Red Room. In a matter of hours, violent outbreaks among individuals experiencing hallucinations and painful physical symptoms spread worldwide. Initially, the news reports attempt to frame the violence linked to this social media outlet as socially based (cyber-bullying, etc.) However, this narrative is quickly overwhelmed as the violence reaches global proportions, and the audience sees the emergence of a new assemblage subjectivity: digital-viral subjectivity. Military and police authorities, as with Umbrella Corp in *Resident Evil* (Anderson, 2002-2016) attempt to block and control contagious subjectivity by suppressing information and brute physical force. But the nature of the contagion makes it impossible; characters video-chat with one another, post and consume information on the internet, and use their phones and their Social Red Room pages to share concerns and condolences. They are already a part of the contagion, and yet they still experience themselves as stable subjects to whom something is happening and not vectors in themselves.

As with *Pontypool* (McDonald, 2008), this film also shows the transformation of characters as they are becoming a subjectivity of viral-digital assemblage. However, unlike the portrayal of the linguistic zombie, the proliferation of the digital zombie is often shot from the

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

perspective of the infected or right next to them. Akin to *Otto*, the film focuses on the zombies' gaze, and the sutured audience experiences what they experience. Even before the infection begins, from very early in the film, shots often position the viewer as a Social Red Room user, wherein the laptop or phone screen that is being seen by a character fills the whole screen. This generates the illusion that the viewer is looking at their own device, a stylistic choice made even more compelling by the fact that the viewer, statistically, is very likely to be watching the film on a device like a phone, laptop or tablet. When the group of friends who comprise the cast of characters begin their New Year's Eve festivities, we view them almost entirely as updates on their Social Red Room page, conversations with characters on screen and real-time chats. Thus, when the infection begins to spread through the characters using the Social Red Room, we also experience this as if it is happening on our own screens, inviting us to also engage as viral subjectivity assemblages, if we presuppose that we are not already.

One of the first characters to begin to manifest and transform is Steve. For the first thirty minutes or so of the film, we have interacted with him mostly via his Social Red Room page, watching him post, looking at his profile pictures, and briefly through the screen of his girlfriend's phone as she video records him. In this initial scene of manifestation, we see Steve scrolling through his Social Red Room message board on his phone, something we have become accustomed to with all the characters. However, this time, as we/he looks at his phone, we/he sees a series of almost subliminally quick, flashing images coupled with static appear on his screen, possibly a hardware glitch. But seconds after the flashing images, Steve's phone begins to vibrate, and the screen shows that he has a call from an unknown caller. In the violent hallucination that follows, Steve answers the call but hears only static. When he tries to pull the phone away, black wires reach from the phone and begins to meld with his/our face (See Fig. 25,

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

below), violating the assumption that he/we are solid and impenetrable. We see him and ourselves as coupling with the screen, as an assemblage of human-screen. We have a similar experience from the perspective of his girlfriend, Kaitlyn. In her/our hallucination, she/we see



Figure 25: Antisocial (2013)

ourselves pulling a long, endless, slimy black wire from out of her/our mouth and when it becomes taught we/she attempts to cut it. Again, the body and subjectivity is not shown or experienced as human, but rather as an assemblage or organic and inorganic, digital and ‘material.’

As he continues to shift, Steve’s/our hallucinations become less contained and are no longer tethered to a technological apparatus, such as a phone or tablet. Instead, we can almost think of it the viral as a Wi-Fi signal, with ourselves, our bodies, our minds as the receivers for this signal¹³. We and Steve are standing in a doorway, we/he look over his shoulder and when

¹³ Of course, technological development as we know is a movement toward technology becoming closer to, more intimately connected with our bodies and our perceptions and so we might see this film in part, as an expression of anxiety about this movement and what it will mean for ourselves as subjects and individuals (See V. Conclusion).

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

he/we turn back around the room appears to be full of dark figures, all standing with their backs turned. They speak to him/us in unison, their images flashing and shifting, their heads twisting from side to side in stilted motion, like a video feed with bad reception, trying to get through. The figures inform us that we/Steve are already a part of what appears to be a hive-like subjectivity. “Don’t fight it, Steve. It’s already happened,” the digital-assemblage of Social Red Room users tells us/Steve and, we/Steve soon discover that this is true.

Toward the end of the film, we as the characters discover the contagion through a video that was posted by one of the developers of the Social Red Room. He tells us that a subliminal code embedded in the Social Red Room interface is the source of the virus. As in the case of Umbrella Corp, this code, this project, was developed to increase profits but generated instead unintended symptoms, mutations and consequences. It made the Social Red Room more ‘addictive,’ thus increasing its popularity and income. But the Social Red Room viral began to attain its own subjectivity; its own desire for proliferation and mutation not for profit but simply for becoming. Users began to develop a growth in the brain that allowed for better reception and processing of this signal, leading to aggression, hallucinations and headaches. The developer attempted to shut it down. However, the Social Red Room virus-assemblage reacted by speeding up the process, by destroying and disintegrating the individual, the subject that attempted to destroy it. It transforms the users into vectors for the viral, until the growth of their brain exceeds the limits of their skulls, causing them to die, only to be resurrected coupled with the Social Red Room viral subjectivity.

There is, of course, always an attempt to block these couplings and formations, to kill or prevent the viral subjectivity and preserve the human subject. In *Antisocial* (Calahan, 2013) Sam, the main protagonist and this film’s ‘final girl,’ attempts to block the becoming of viral

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

subjectivity by drilling into her skull and removing the growth, a method suggested to have variable but promising results by an online video. But despite surviving this terrible method, Sam is still unable to stop this becoming. We learn in the sequel to this film, *Antisocial 2*, that the Social Red Room viral subjectivity inevitably re-emerges in those who have performed the surgery. And it has naturally continued to adapt through a series of ‘updates’, the newest of which promises to infect even those who stay away from screens and the Social Red Room interface. In her powerlessness to stop the apocalyptic viral update, Sam attempts to re-establish the non-contagious, stable subject in her attempts to reunite with the infant she gave birth to after the events of the first film. In this search we see, as with Mickey in *The Battery* (Gardner, 2012), and attempt to return to the familial, to use (in this case) the Child as a sort of talisman against viral subjectivity, to block contagion. But, as in the attempt to remove herself from the assemblage, to cut out the link that allows her to couple with viral subjectivity, her reunion with her child fails. The child, who was a fetus when Sam first became infected with the virus, turns out to be the next mutation of the viral subjectivity, ultimately using her imagined filial relation with her ‘mother’ to pull Sam into an assemblage with the viral.

Last-ditch attempt to save the subject are not unique to *Antisocial* (Calahan, 2013) or *The Battery* (Gardner, 2012). In most of the viral zombie films I have discussed so far, we witness and take part in some attempt---whether through finding a cure, a place without infected, or a method of containment--- to reinstate the ascendancy of the human subject. With the exception *Otto; or Up with Dead People* (LaBruce, 2008) which seems to unapologetically embrace zombie subjectivity, in most zombie films we find a recoiling in horror from the possibility of ‘becoming one of those things,’ and thus becoming ‘less human’ (whatever that means). ‘Final girl’ par excellence, Alice (Anderson, 2002-2016), does not exactly embrace herself as a viral

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

subjectivity. She spends much of the *Resident Evil* (Anderson) franchise attempting to both find a cure to let her ‘be human again’ and rid the world of the mutated and reanimated assemblages. All this, to save or establish the human subject. However, a question that Alice never asks, but which I believe the zombie-film forces us to ask is: What is it that we are attempting to keep alive? Perhaps these are simply the final trembles before she and we, can let the concept of the human pass.

Conclusion: The zombie apocalypse has already happened

In the final scenes of *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter* (Anderson, 2016), Alice is seemingly offered everything she has spent the films attempting to achieve. She releases an airborne anti-virus that should ‘cure’ the T-virus that will be carried on the wind, a much slower dissemination than the proliferation of the original virus. This cure, however, also has the side-effect of killing the host. And yet, because of her unique relation to the T-virus, Alice survives, much to her surprise. Her so-called healthy tissue is preserved without the viral components. Upon regaining consciousness Alice has an uncharacteristically pleasant conversation with the

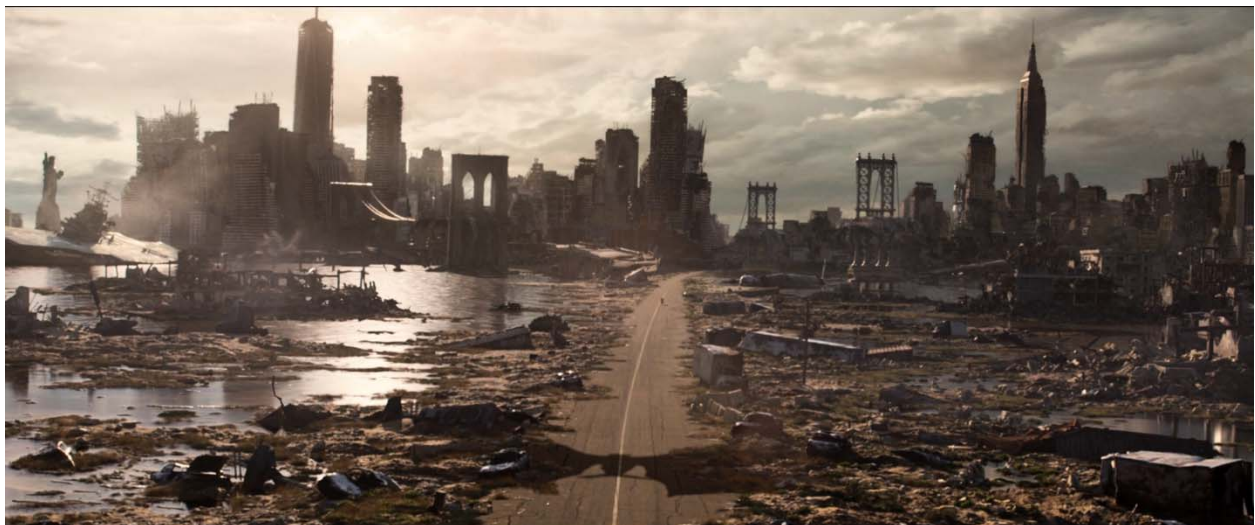


Figure 26: Resident Evil: The Final Chapter (2016)

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

which allows her to upload images from the ‘original’ Alice’s memories, downloaded before she died. After a close-up shot of Alice’s tearful response to viewing “the childhood [she] never had” (Anderson, 2016), the film cuts to Alice riding down a dusty road, toward a broken and burnt-out city-scape that was once Manhattan as shadows of winged T-viral mutations hover above her (Fig. 26, above).

How do we conceptualize this Alice at the end of the film? What would we psychologists of the human science persuasion make of her as a patient, or a case study? If we maintain our allegiance to a human subject, we might understand this as a triumph of the human subject in the face of adversity. We might be satisfied to think of Alice, cured of the T-virus as finally whole and complete. We might imagine or hope for her that this ending is the beginning of a process of integration. From this integration, we could posit that she will undergo something akin to ‘normal’ development, wherein the child’s experiences and memories give birth to the adult that she has/will become. This conceptualization would reduce the *Resident Evil* films to a bloody recapitulation of *Pinocchio* (Disney, 1940) complete with a blue fairy (or, in this case, a Red Queen) who judges Alice worthy of the human mantle and offers her what she needs to become a ‘real girl.’ And yet, to do this, we would have frame the nonhuman relations that constitute her in terms of the ways in which they may enhance or detract from this human Alice subject. In this framing, we would be forced to categorize Alice, prior to her final interaction with the Red Queen, as an incomplete or failed human subject. And, thus, when the Red Queen offers her the memories of the host DNA from which she was cloned, her relation to technology would be nothing more than prosthesis. Furthermore, we would have to frame her infection with the T-virus as a relation that detracts from her humanness until she is able to find the cure.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

This would exclude much of what Alice has passed through in the unfolding of the *Resident Evil* films. It would deny the extent to which these relations constitute, and have always constituted, her. We would have to dismiss as irrelevant that Alice's 'new memories' are some of many productions of a relation with the technological. We would have to ignore the new expressions, affects and capabilities made possible by her relation to the T-virus and the mutations it opened, and continues to open, onto. For, as the shadows that pursue Alice at the end imply, her uncoupling with the T-virus on a biological level does not do erase her relation to the viral. If we accept Alice as haecceity and nothing more (or less), then our formulations will never be a reproduction of a previous state but rather the propagation of something entirely new. For a haecceity as posited by Scotus posited and taken up by Deleuze and Guattari is indivisible and, as such, one aspect of it cannot be altered without resulting in something completely different, the production of a new haecceity. In this paradigm Alice's choice to accept the implantation of memories from the 'original' Alice is not a return to the origin or the reproduction of an original Alice. Instead this choice can be conceptualized as a becoming that results from the relations among Alice-clone, the artificial intelligence known as the Red Queen, and the other Alices. This is, of course, only one of an infinite contagious relation that we might recognize as a becoming-viral subjectivity. In this human science that escapes the human, we would be equally interested in her relation to the landscape, to the virus, to the motorcycle, to the horizon. We could pursue with veracious curiosity the ways in which the Alice and the virus move through one another, proliferating and disrupting, deterritorializing each other and whatever and whomever this becoming-virus meets.

Such a formulation, made possible by the 'higher deterritorialization' of the human subject, would follow the many flows of Alice's desire and to account for and perhaps even take

part in the creation of new assemblages, relations, or affects. This would mark a radical change, a true departure from the normative project and perspective of psychology in general and even psychology as a human science. Rather than attempting to restore or improve upon that which we assume to be fundamental to the patient Alice (the human subject, the reproductive and familial, the self as whole) we would instead be attempting to create affects of which she does not know she is capable. Instead of attempting to find the source and terminus of desire or to bind it in law or what we take to be ‘reality principle’ we would take part in and facilitate this flow. Instead of attempting to determine or fix Alice’s identity or our notion of her subject-hood, to intervene or block through case formulation or praxis, we could embrace the unmasterable becoming that unfolds before us.

This embrace would be the mobilization of schizoanalysis as therapeutic praxis theorized by Deleuze and Guattari and actually practiced by Guattari. In his book, *Chaosmosis: An ethico-aesthetic paradigm* (1992), Guattari states, “it is not the job of schizoanalysis to force or slow-down events...it is not at all a question of pretending to control or over-code them, but simply to... assist them” (Guattari 1979, p. 93). This assistance does not attempt to direct the flow of desire but to follow it, wherever it leads, even if it takes us to directions and territories that may seem random or insignificant. Guattari (1992) makes clear that the schizoanalyst must be a psychic and material omnivore, taking up whatever the patient brings in, rather than forcing the steady diet of oedipal fantasy or deep and profound emotional content. Instead, he proposes the recognition of the many ways in which subjectivity, what I call viral subjectivity, is propagated through the desiring flows that put the patient in relation with all sorts of things: media, thought, viruses, technologies, animals. Guattari (1992) employs the example of watching television as a

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

human-television becoming that is formed from the hypnotic aspects of the medium of picture and sound, the information that is exchanged.

If we were to schizoanalyze Alice as our patient, where might the flow of her desire lead us? One ‘direction’ that her desire would likely lead us is away from constraint and toward ever-increasing mobility. At the beginning of the franchise, Alice’s approach to the constraints of the Hive lab is constant movement. This, of course, has a certain practical function. Movement is generally advised when one is being pursued by a ravenous horde. But even before the horde revealed itself, Alice wandered the confines of the Hive, not in search for anything in particular. In the absence of memories, she did not share in the mission of the rest of the security team with which she found herself. Just as her interaction with the room in her introductory scene, Alice appeared to interact with and move through everything as if encountering it for the first time. In *A thousand plateaus* (1980) Deleuze and Guattari tie haecceity and movement together through their conceptualization of the ‘girl.’ They state that “[t]he girl...is defined by a relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness, by a combination of atoms, an emission of particles: haecceity” (1980, p. 276). The term girl here is not meant as a derision of women (as it so often socially employed). In fact, Deleuze and Guattari, identify use of the ‘girl’ to deride both woman and boys as a consequence of the social blocking of becoming that the girl embodies. It is an attempt to constrain the capability of the girl to “...slip in everywhere, between orders, acts, ages, sexes; they produce n molecular sexes...” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980 p. 277). Alice, in her resistance to constraint and her desire for mobility, embodies the haecceity of the girl.

Once Alice’s resistance to constraint and desire for continuous movement began to come up against the constraints of the Hive, she persisted and began to take steps of her own. These expressions of the flow of her desire brought Alice into relation with the T-virus, the mutations,

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

and the Red Queen in ways that went beyond mere antagonism. When Alice first met the Red Queen, she watched as the artificially intelligent security system summarily killed and dismembered several persons on the security team with which she was traveling. In reaction to this carnage and the realization that the Red Queen had also killed everyone who had been working in the Hive prior to its being locked down, Alice worked with the surviving team members to deactivate her. But, once Alice began to shift her focus to escaping the Hive, she was forced to reboot the Red Queen and, in so doing, formed an alliance or dark pact, what Deleuze and Guattari would call an unholy nuptial, with the artificial intelligence. This alliance produces a greater mobility within the Hive and, ultimately, outside of it, increasing the power of her desiring flows. Later, Alice and two of the three other remaining survivors were betrayed by the third, who attempted to entomb them in the Hive at gunpoint. Alice, though she had not yet come into physical contact or even proximity with the it, made a passive pact with the licker mutation. This passive pact occurred when she knowingly withheld her knowledge of the imminent danger the licker presented to the traitorous character. Thus, she joined with the mutation in its killing of her enemy.

This flow of desire away from constraint and toward movement that also opens her to the formation of various assemblages and relations with the viral and the technological continues, on a much broader scale throughout the subsequent films. Alice is in constant motion throughout the various backdrops of the films. Though she is, at times, motivated by something like revenge, more often than not her movement appears to have no immediate purpose but the desire for movement for its own sake. As she walks, runs, and rides across the apocalyptic landscape, she continues to encounter and make pacts with various people, groups, viral mutations, and technologies. As the films continue, Alice is becoming more and more mobile. Between her use

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

of her becoming-viral body and the increasing openness and emptiness of the landscape, she experiences fewer and fewer constraints on her mobility. While movement was prevalent in the installments one through five of the *Resident Evil* film franchise (2002-2015), each of these five films ended with a close-up shot of Alice standing still, looking into the distance that quickly panned out to a panoramic shot of the landscape she was standing in. However, in *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter* (Anderson, 2016), though the film repeats the cinematographic structure of the endings of the previous films there is an important difference. The final panoramic shot of Alice shows her moving, riding her motorcycle through her surroundings. Though the difference may seem minor, it speaks to Alice's continued flow of desire toward movement that only seems to increase in power and scope. This final scene is reminiscent of Deleuze and Guattari's (1980) account of an artist who:

 painted a portrait of the girl, to whom he linked the fate of the revolution: her speed, her freely machinic body, her intensities, her abstract line... her nonfigurative character—"the nonfigurative of desire." Joan of Arc? (p. 277)

Certainly, Alice fits well with this notion of the nonfigurative character in her at once iconic and yet anonymous movements throughout the films. The invocation Saint Joan of Arc is particularly compelling. It captures Alice's pugnacious resistance to constraint alongside her deterritorialized subjectivity which is sometimes associated with or labelled as 'psychosis.' What account also emphasizes it the way in which movement is not restricted to physical mobility. The *Resident Evil* (Anderson, 2002-2016) films do portray and communicate physical movement quite clearly, which is unsurprising due to the inherent movement of cinema and the action-horror subgenre which privileges activity over the stillness of a rolling landscape. However, we can think of any of a number of Alice's experiences as movement. Her shifting alliances with the Red Queen can

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

be understood as a sort of psychic movement. And so, as this brief schizoanalysis shows us, there is an alternative to Alice as a broken subject cum restored whole. It is a praxis that does not seek to contain, restrain, or control the unfolding of events but to trace and even assist them. Of course, this is not an exhaustive schizoanalysis, but merely a tracing of one of an infinite array of possible desire-flows.

One may be tempted to dismiss what has proceeded as a fanciful digression into some projected future for psychology in the wake of the apocalypse. But one does so at their peril. For, Alice is already our patient and has been for some time. Like Alice, none of our patients can fit comfortably within the category of the human, as more and more they join their already assemblaged affects, bodies, experiences, etc. with assemblages of technology, sociality, media, etc. The human subject has already passed. What comes for us now from through our office doors, or sits patiently in our waiting rooms, what enters our clinics is no longer human and, really, never was. It is a proliferative, viral subjectivity that moves using flows of desire that at once wash away that reductive human subject and yet make possible an infinite array of relations, affects, and connections. The viral zombie film is not a cautionary tale of what is to come but a reflection of what has already come to pass. Psychology, if it is to truly depart from a set of normative theories and praxes as those of us of the human science persuasion claim as our desire, must not only accept the demise of the human subject but rejoice at the grave of the human subject as viral subjectivity crawls from it. For, as the lyrics and title of the Sufjan Stevens song, *They are Night Zombies!! They are Neighbors!! They are Back from the Dead!! Ahhhh!!* (2006) implies in horrificomedic fashion, the zombie apocalypse has already happened--and we are overrun!

Works Cited

Anderson, P.W.S. (dir.). (2002). *Resident Evil* [Motion Picture]. United States: Screen Gems.

Anderson, P.W.S. (dir.). (2010). *Resident Evil: Afterlife*. [Motion Picture]. United States: Screen Gems.

Anderson, P.W.S. (dir.). (2016). *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter*. [Motion Picture]. United States: Screen Gems.

Anderson, P.W.S. (dir.). (2012). *Resident Evil: Retribution*. [Motion Picture]. United States: Screen Gems.

Bersani, L. (2009). *Is the Rectum A Grave?: and Other Essays*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bjork. (1995). All the Modern Things. *Post* [CD]. London: One Little Indian Records.

Brooks, M. (2003). *The Zombie Survival Guide*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Calahan, C. (dir.). (2013). *Antisocial* [DVD]. Canada: Breaking Glass Films.

Calahan, C. (dir.). (2015). *Antisocial 2* [DVD]. Canada: Breaking Glass Films.

Cohen, J.J. (1996). *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Colebrook, C. (2014). *Death of the Posthuman: Essays on Extinction*, Vol. 1. Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press.

Colebrook, C. (2006). *Deleuze: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Colebrook, C. (2010). *Deleuze and the Meaning of Life*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Colebrook, C. (2014). *Sex after Life: Essays on Extinction*, Vol. 2. Ann Arbor: Open

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

Humanities Press.

Coppola, F.F. (dir.) (1992). *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. Los Angeles: Columbia Pictures.

Cross, Richard. (2014). Medieval Theories of Haecceity. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Electronic source:

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/medieval-haecceity/>.

Deleuze, G. (2000). The Brain is the Screen: An Interview with Gilles Deleuze. In G. Flaxman (Ed.) *The Brain is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema* (365-373).

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published in 1981).

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1983). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. (R. Hurley, M. Seem, & H.R. Lane, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published in 1972).

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (2011). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. (B. Massumi, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published in 1980).

Deleuze, G. (2001). *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. (Robert Hurley, Trans.). San Francisco: City Lights Publishers. (Original work published in 1988)

Edelman, L. (2004). *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Elliot, P. (2010). Desire and the “(Un)Becoming Other”: The Question of Intelligibility. In *Debates in Transgender, Queer, and Feminist Theory: Contested Sites* (61-84). Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Group.

England, E. (dir.). (2013). *Contracted*. [Motion Picture]. United States: IFC Films.

Fink, B. (1999). *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique*.

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

- Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Fresnadilla, J.C. (dir). *28 Weeks Later* [DVD]. London: Fox Searchlight Pictures.
- Freud, S. (1995). Civilization and Its Discontents in (P. Gay, ed). *The Freud Reader*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc. (Original article published in 1930).
- Freud, S. (1995). Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality in (P. Gay, ed). *The Freud Reader*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc. (Original article published in 1905)
- Gardner, J. (dir.) (2012). *The Battery*. [Motion Picture]. United States: FilmBuff Studios.
- Godspeed You! Black Emporer. (1997). East Hastings. *F#A#∞* [CD]. Montreal: Hotel2Tango.
- Guattari, F. (1995) *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*. (P. Bains & J. Pefanis Trans.). Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. (Original work published in 1992)
- Guattari, F. (2011). *The Machinic Unconscious*. (T. Adkins Trans.). Los Angeles: Semiotext(e). (Original work published in 1979)
- Halberstam, J. (2011). *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Halperin, D. (1995). *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kristeva, J. (1987). *Tales of Love*. (Leon Roudiez, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kuti, Fela. (1976). *Zombie*. On Zombie [LP]. Nigeria: Coconut Records.
- Lambert, G. (2000). Cinema and the Outside. In G. Flaxman (Ed.), *The Brain is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema* (253-292). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lambert, G. (2008). Schizoanalysis and the Cinema of the Brain. In I. Buchanan and P. MacCormack (Eds.), *Deleuze and the Schizoanalysis of Cinema* (27-38). London:

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

Continuum International Publishing.

LaBruce, B. (Producer) & LaBruce, B. (Director). (2008). *Otto; Or, Up with Dead People*.

Canada: Strand Releasing Productions.

MacCormack, P. (2009). Queer Posthumanism: Cyborgs, Animals, Monsters and Perverts. In N.

Giffney & M. O'Rourke (Eds.), *Ashgate Research Companion to Queer Theory* (111-129). Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Group.

McDonald, Bruce, (dir.). (2008) *Pontypool* [DVD]. Toronto: Maple Pictures

Miliev, V. & Hurst, M. (dirs.). (2015) *Re-Kill* [DVD]. Los Angeles: After Dark Films.

Milot, J. & Murnion, C. (dirs.), (2015). *Cooties*. [Motion Picture]. United States: Lionsgate.

Mulcahey, R. (dir.). (2007). *Resident Evil: Extinction*. [Motion Picture]. United States: Screen Gems.

O'Riorden, D. (1994). *Zombie*. On No Need to Argue [CD]. New York: Island Records.

Parr, A. (Ed.) (2010). *The Deleuze Dictionary Revised Edition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Rajchman, J. (2000). *The Deleuze Connections*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Romero, G.A. (dir.). (1978). *Dawn of the Dead* [DVD]. United States: Laurel Group.

Romero, G.A. (dir.). (1968). *Night of the Living Dead* [DVD]. United States: Image 10.

Rodowick, D.N. (2007). *The Virtual Life of Film*. Boston: Harvard University Press.

Snyder, Z. (dir.). (2004). *Dawn of the Dead* [DVD]. United States: Universal Pictures. DVD.

Saunders, R.A. (2012). Undead Spaces: Fear, Globalisation, and the Popular Geopolitics of Zombiism, *Geopolitics*, 17:1, 80-104.

Silverman, K. (1983). *The Subject of Semiotics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Spindler, F. (2010). Gilles Deleuze: A Philosophy of Immanence in (J. Bornemark & H. Ruin,

THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

eds) *Phenomenology and Religion: New Frontiers*. Sodertorne: Sodertorne University Press.

Spinoza, B. (2001). *Ethics*. (W.H. White, trans.). Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd.

(Original work published in 1677).

Witt, A. (dir.). (2004). *Resident Evil: Apocalypse*. [Motion Picture]. United States: Constantine Films.